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Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/56/3, A/56/38, A/56/174, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/268, A/56/279, A/56/306, A/56/316, A/56/328, A/56/329 and A/56/472)

Agenda item 113: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/306, A/56/319 and Add.1)

1. **Ms. Khalil** (Egypt), after expressing support for the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, reaffirmed that her country was determined to defend women's rights and to promote women's participation in political, economic, social and cultural life, firmly believing that the advancement of women was one of the foundations of social development. For some years, therefore, Egypt had been devoting itself to the adoption of legislative measures on behalf of women based on the national Constitution, which provided for equality between the sexes, as the decisive body of law enabling women to obtain a divorce.

2. Accordingly, a national council for women had been established in 2000 and specifically given responsibility for proposing policies to enhance the empowerment of women, to draw up a national project for the advancement of women, to represent Egypt in international conferences, to provide documentation and to organize conferences and seminars on issues relating to the advancement of women. The Council also worked to promote implementation of the recommendations of the Beijing Conference in the areas of research, health, population, poverty reduction and the participation of women in economic and social life.

3. In accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General, the Egyptian delegation advocated taking women's issues into account when drawing up economic policies and implementing programmes to improve the economic and social situation of women. Egypt hoped that the International Conference on Financing for Development, which was to be held in 2002, would emphasize the special problems of women. The wife of the President of Egypt had proposed that a trust fund should be set up for the advancement of women in order to enhance the participation and empowerment of women.

4. The Egyptian delegation underlined that it was essential to establish equality of access for women in all areas, especially research, training and information technology, and expressed regret concerning the difficult financial situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

5. Finally, she welcomed the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth special session, which stressed equality of access to care for HIV-positive women and girls.

6. **Ms. Elliott** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), fully supported the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had made a key contribution to the advancement of women in all countries and noted that the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had drawn attention to the links between gender equality, sustainable development and peace. It had also identified 12 critical areas of concern and highlighted the new challenges posed by globalization, which affected women in particular.

7. The articulation of policy should be matched by the implementation of women's rights and it was regrettable that, despite the achievements of the previous few years, women continued to be disproportionately affected by poverty. Moreover, universal access to basic social services still had not been achieved in many countries, pregnancy-related deaths remained high and the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic had only recently been recognized.

8. Following the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, CARICOM had identified six priority areas based on the findings of research carried out at national and regional levels: poverty; violence against women; health and related services; access to and participation in the definition of economic structure and the production process; power-sharing and decision-making; and the girl child. Since 1995, the CARICOM States had made considerable progress in those areas, in which they continued to pursue further measures. It was noteworthy that the biennial report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), entitled "Progress of the World's Women 2000", gave

favourable ratings to the Caribbean concerning the participation of women in politics, the education of the girl child and women and the undertaking of gender budget initiatives. Moreover, in 10 of the 37 Permanent Missions of CARICOM States to the United Nations, at least 50 per cent of staff were women. Much remained to be done, however, to achieve the vision set out in the Beijing Declaration. In that regard, the CARICOM States had particularly emphasized the pursuit of legal reform in the interest of promoting gender equality. At the regional level, the CARICOM secretariat had prepared model legislation on issues affecting women in areas such as citizenship, domestic violence, equality in employment, equal pay, inheritance, maintenance and sexual harassment with a view to assisting governments in addressing gaps in their legal systems, as well as helping civil society and intergovernmental agencies.

9. At the same time, the CARICOM States had endeavoured to implement the conclusions of the special session of the General Assembly (Beijing+5). Among the initiatives adopted was the empowerment of women as a key theme at a meeting of parliamentarians from the CARICOM region, held in Belize in November 2000. In the following month, the CARICOM secretariat had organized a meeting of directors of national machineries at which a strategy had been agreed for mainstreaming gender into the work of the secretariat, as well as at the level of member States. The Nassau Declaration on Health, adopted in 2001 by CARICOM Heads of Government, had made special reference to the empowerment of women in the context of access to health services, thus recognizing the critical role of health in the economic development of the region. In addition, the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) had cooperated closely with UNIFEM in order to better sensitize government officials and regional negotiators to the impact of trade agreements on women. The CARICOM States also continued to fulfil their reporting obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

10. CARICOM was troubled by the dire financial situation facing the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and called on the international community to lend it support. CARICOM also welcomed the role played by the Commission on the Status of Women and by the Economic and Social Council and fully supported Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

11. In conclusion, she hoped that a gender perspective would be mainstreamed into the four important development-related conferences to be convened by the United Nations in 2002.

12. **Mr. Kafando** (Burkina Faso), speaking on behalf of the West African States, associated himself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He was concerned by the critical financial situation facing INSTRAW as set forth in document A/56/279 and offered his encouragement to its secretariat and staff as they waited for the situation to be brought under control. As for the results of the activities of UNIFEM (A/56/174), the West African States, whose own activities for the advancement of women coincided with those of UNIFEM, hoped to benefit fully from the Fund's support in the future, particularly in connection with women's training and capacity-building.

13. Despite the essential role of women in African social life, the majority were illiterate and access to education was still very limited for girls. Maternal and child mortality rates remained relatively high despite scientific progress and the ambition of the World Health Organization (WHO), which had called for health for all by the year 2000. In addition, certain traditional and customary practices such as female genital mutilation continued to exist. Measures to eradicate those practices had been taken and the concerted action of certain countries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had appreciably diminished the practice of genital mutilation, one of the primary ways in which Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) was transmitted.

14. National policies sought to remedy those problems and took into account the growing role of women in economic development, especially in the effort to combat poverty through microcredit, which had increased considerably in recent years. In that way women contributed towards improving the standard of living of households and developing the informal sector. In rural areas, women's community organizations also participated in development and socio-economic activities, side by side with NGOs.

15. Data with which to quantify the contribution of women to national development, however, were not

always available and, despite legal instruments guaranteeing the integration of women into the development process, inequality remained the rule. In addition, armed conflicts all too often drove women and children into exile and exposed them to many violations of their rights. In the political area, despite the priority accorded to gender equality, few women acceded to positions of responsibility, owing especially to sociocultural realities, sexist attitudes and discrimination.

16. In the social sphere, the broad-based and ever more effective literacy programmes that had been launched were being accompanied by campaigns of information and consciousness-raising, education and communication regarding health, hygiene, family planning, fundamental rights, the control of HIV/AIDS, mutilation and violence. Inequality between men and women also existed in connection with HIV/AIDS, women being far more affected by the pandemic, which continued to spread. Its eradication was thus a prerequisite for the development and advancement of women.

17. **Ms. González** (Cuba) said that the situation of women throughout the world remained complex, especially in developing countries, where, in addition to war, famine, disease and other obstacles, the full development of women was hampered by external indebtedness, neoliberal structural adjustment programmes and the fallout of globalization. Women constituted nearly 70 per cent of the planet's poor, yet their participation in the economically active population was lower than that of men; at the same time, it was they who were the most affected by unemployment and who held the least secure jobs. Nearly two thirds of adult illiterates were women, and 80 million girls had no access to primary education. With regard to health, nearly half a million women died each year due to causes related to pregnancy, childbirth and abortion. The risk of maternal death was nearly 90 times greater in Africa than in Europe. In sub-Saharan Africa, life expectancy was 30 years lower than in developed countries. Generally speaking, quality of life among women was declining at an alarming rate and at all levels.

18. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the documents adopted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly continued to guide international action aimed at the advancement and equality of woman, and it was the task of the United Nations system, the relevant organizations and Governments to take up the major challenge of concrete realization of the strategies defined. Access to resources remained one of the main obstacles to equality, peace and development and had been adopted as an objective by the global meetings devoted to women, both in 1995 and in 2000. In the current unipolar world, enormous resources were squandered on the arms race, the cosmetics industry or advertising instead of being dedicated to progress, well-being and development, the consequences of which would greatly benefit women.

19. International cooperation that respected State sovereignty and the freedom of peoples was essential to developing countries, in particular, to supplement their national actions. Greater resources would have to be devoted to the various activities aimed at improving the status of women in order to put an end to discrimination and promote the advancement and well-being of all. For that purpose, a truly just and democratic international order must be established in which the countries accounting for the majority of the planet's inhabitants would participate on an equal basis in the decision-making process.

20. In Cuba, the status attained by women in society bore witness to the social progress made in the country. The experience of the Cuban revolution showed that a different lifestyle, more beneficial to human beings, was possible and that, within such a framework of conquest of justice and struggle for equality, it was possible to transform the condition of women radically and put an end to the discrimination against them. Thus, for example, the share of women was 33 per cent in positions of economic, social and political responsibility, slightly more than 66 per cent among technicians and middle and top management and approximately 42 per cent in scientific research. Maternal mortality was only 2.2 per 10,000 childbirths, and the life expectancy at birth of Cuban women was over 76 years. All those results had been achieved in spite of the coercive measures taken unilaterally against Cuba (with consequences that were particularly marked with respect to women), namely the economic blockade imposed by the Government of the United States of America on the basis of extraterritorial laws contrary to State sovereignty, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

21. **Ms. Paterson** (New Zealand) speaking on agenda item 112, said that, despite the commitments made at the Beijing+5 Review, the Millennium Summit and, more recently, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, a gap remained between words and action.

The Commission on the Status of Women therefore had a key role to play and at its next session should consider taking concrete measures to improve its working methods in order to produce credible results. She noted that her Government had hosted a United Nations workshop on the submission of reports relating to implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the countries of the South Pacific and stressed that that instrument should be ratified by all States. Her Government had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, as should all Member States, and had also contributed 100,000 New Zealand dollars to the Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Platform for Action created to support work within the United Nations to promote implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocol and work on behalf of women, peace and security. In that regard, she said that Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) provided a good platform for mainstreaming gender into United Nations work on peace and security and urged the Fifth Committee to endorse the recommendations for the creation of new positions for gender experts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

22. The United Nations policy for mainstreaming gender in all its activities had been significantly advanced by the work of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and that work should also be boosted by the decision of the Economic and Social Council to include gender mainstreaming on its agenda. Since equality issues must be integrated into all activities in order to achieve gender equality, all bodies of the United Nations system should make gender mainstreaming a priority.

23. Her Government had taken further steps to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated into the policy-making process and her delegation had helped draft the resolution on improving the situation of women in the United Nations system. It was disappointing that consideration of that issue had been hampered by the lateness of the Secretary-General's report (A/56/472) and that the number of women staff with appointments of one year or more had in fact declined in 2000 but she noted that incremental steps were being taken towards achieving the goal of a 50/50 gender balance in the United Nations, with 14 departments and offices meeting that goal in 2000. She urged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in that regard.

24. **Mr. Lee Ho-jin** (Republic of Korea) said that there had been much progress towards gender equality and that close cooperation between governments, international organizations and civil society had been essential. He was nevertheless concerned by the number of young women affected by HIV/AIDS and the continuing increase in mother-to-infant transmission. Recalling efforts in the area of women's fundamental rights, he noted that his Government had signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, with ratification of both under way.

25. With regard to the advancement of women, his Government had established a Ministry of Gender Equality responsible for planning, coordinating, enforcing and assessing policies concerning women, and for promoting gender equality. That Ministry had recently extended paid maternity leave to 90 days.

26. Turning to the issue of women and information technologies, he noted that 43 per cent of the Koreans with Internet access were women and stressed that women must keep abreast of developments in that area in order to become active players in a knowledge-based society. To that end, his Government was providing education and training programmes aimed at expanding the role of women. Housewives in particular had been targeted, 2 million of whom had already benefited from those programmes.

27. In order to counter adolescent girls' lack of interest in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as mathematics and science, his Government was developing specifically girl-friendly educational tools designed to encourage interest in science at an early age.

28. Much remained to be done, however, and his Government looked forward to partnerships with non-governmental organizations and civil society in order to strengthen its contribution to the advancement of women around the world.

29. **Mr. Rahmtalla** (Sudan) said that every society should implement a strategy to promote women's rights which took its special characteristics into account. Since justice was the underlying principle for all its political choices, the Sudan considered that society as a whole could not pride itself on enjoying all its rights if women and girls could not exercise theirs. Despite the efforts of the international community and civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations,

the decisions adopted at the Beijing Conference concerning the elimination of all forms of violence against women and their empowerment had not been fully implemented. His delegation considered that States would be unable to comply with that obligation without outside help, and the relevant international cooperation should be increased. Noting that women who wished to establish small businesses should have equal access to the necessary equipment, materials and capital, he emphasized that developing countries and least developed countries, weighed down by the burden of debt, were unable to implement socio-economic programmes; moreover, some were subjected to economic sanctions or unilateral coercive measures. Steps should be taken at the international level to ensure that those countries, which were already enduring the backlash of globalization and were lagging behind in the area of technology and communications, were not entirely excluded from the international economic scene, with the resulting deterioration in the situation of their women and children.

30. The Sudan, which gave special attention to the status of women, was trying to integrate them into all sectors of society. The principal spheres of action were education, health, peace, the stability of the family and of society, development, and the fight against poverty.

31. The outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly constituted a step towards the improvement of the status of women and their empowerment in different sectors of society. However, the goals established could not be attained without the complete elimination of poverty and all forms of violence against women, particularly sexual exploitation.

32. Women, children and families were the primary victims of the wars and conflicts that were devastating the world and that were used by some to fulfil their economic and political ambitions. The Sudan considered that the accent should be put on human values and the natural structure of the family in order to establish a healthy, stable society, in which women could fully play their role, and educate the future generations. The arrogance of certain civilizations that believed themselves to be superior to others should also be condemned.

33. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

34. Uganda, where the majority of the women lived in rural areas, was pleased that various studies had taken into consideration the impact of world trends on rural development. However, rural women, with their ability to overcome adversity and contribute to the development of society, were particularly exposed to poverty, disease (particularly HIV/AIDS), and cultural practices. They required training in the skills that would enable them to advance. In order to enable rural women and all other women to occupy their rightful place, the political, economic, social and cultural factors adversely affecting them should be identified, and men should be made aware of the obstacles to their advancement.

35. Anxious to ensure that Ugandan women were able to enjoy their rights, the Government of Uganda was ensuring that they had equal opportunities for education, employment, health services and political participation.

36. The gap that separated urban women, particularly in the developed world, who sought to double their earnings on the stock market, from rural women, who merely aspired to establish a link to the market place, should be closed. Her delegation was pleased to learn that, in partnership with other organizations, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was endeavouring to help women acquire the ability to ensure their own subsistence and exert influence in the economic, political and judicial spheres, and it hoped that Africa would gain increasing benefits from such initiatives. It welcomed the fact that UNIFEM was helping Ugandan women play an active role in their country's reconstruction.

37. The advances made by women could be set back if the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was forced to reduce its operations for lack of resources. Her delegation considered that the Institute's Board of Trustees should allocate sufficient resources to allow it to conduct more comprehensive research activities. It commended the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women for the continued efforts to "support and monitor efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into the substantive work programmes throughout the United Nations system".

38. **Ms. McGrath-Triulzi** (Observer for the Holy See) reminded participants that the Holy See supported the Beijing Platform for Action, based on the recognition of the dignity of women, the establishment of strategies for development, the ending of violence

against women, and the access of women to employment, land and capital and to basic social services. Those objectives corresponded to the social values promoted by the Holy See as one of the major providers of basic social services to girls and women, especially in developing countries.

39. On the eve of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Pope John Paul II had called on Catholic institutions to renew and strengthen their commitment to the women of the world, particularly the most vulnerable among them. Since then, the world had changed greatly, as shown by the recent special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which had mirrored the current of international political discourse in the face of globalization. The family of nations needed to bestir itself and foster the moral and cultural values that would put the human person and human development at the centre of the process.

40. In order for women to reap the benefits of globalization while avoiding its negative consequences, it was important to recognize their dignity and their role in the family and in society, in order not to reduce them to mere economic agents. So as to enable women and girls to contribute to the architecture of a better world, their rights and fundamental freedoms, especially the right to marry and raise a family, to seek employment and receive appropriate wages, must be protected from abuse and exploitation. Lastly, it was indispensable to invest in basic social services, which constituted an essential condition for their well-being and their integration into economic development. To be actors in the changing economy, women needed to be physically and mentally healthy and possess suitable skills. It was therefore imperative that the education and health care of women and girls should be a priority in development programmes.

41. **Mr. Manalo** (Philippines) stressed that, while a number of States had instituted programmes and policies to empower women, many obstacles remained to be overcome for full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Much still remained to be done in order to mainstream a gender perspective in national, regional and international policies and programmes, so that women would cease to be the first to be affected by poverty and so that they could participate more in decision-making.

42. Although his delegation welcomed the role given to women in keeping and promoting peace in the world and in areas of conflict, it observed that women were still the victims of acts of violence that scarred them for the rest of their lives. National, regional and international efforts were thus needed to prevent all forms of violence against women. His Government gave great importance to the Asian Regional Initiative against Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

43. The Government of the Philippines had promulgated the Migrant Workers Act, to which provisions had recently been added concerning the mail-order procurement of wives via the Internet. The Senate was also reviewing a bill to combat trafficking in women and minors, which provided for severer prison sentences for offenders.

44. A Sponsor's Watchlist Information System had been introduced to prevent acts of violence against Philippine women by their foreign partners, along with a case monitoring system to assist Filipinos overseas seeking assistance in cases of trafficking and immigration. Lastly, educational modules on international migration and development were geared towards the prevention of violence against women migrant workers. His delegation was particularly pleased to note that those programmes were mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/329). His delegation supported the delegation of Georgia, which had highlighted the need for international regulations and cooperation to safeguard the rights of women migrant workers. It would submit a draft resolution on violence against women migrant workers to the Committee.

45. **Mr. Gansukh** (Mongolia), having associated his delegation with the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly still faced many obstacles. His delegation therefore considered that General Assembly resolution 55/71 and the decisions and resolutions of the Commission on the Status of Women provided a comprehensive and well-targeted road map. It also noted that, in the Millennium Declaration, international leaders had recalled that the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women were effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate sustainable development. Mongolia had been among the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention in September 2000. It had presented its third and fourth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and duly noted the latter's recommendations in the context of its action to advance women.

46. Several factors influenced the situation of women in Mongolia, including poverty (which affected 36 per cent of the population), unemployment (42.4 per cent of the unemployed were women), education, health, social protection, culture and behaviour. The Government, in close cooperation with women's non-governmental organizations, the public sector, civil society and the private sector, had implemented a programme to advance the situation of women by improving their health and education and giving women heads of households access to income-generating activities. Also, in January 2001, it had adopted a programme to create an equitable social environment for human development, improve the quality of education and health care, alleviate poverty, promote employment and improve the living conditions of the population, particularly women.

47. Mongolia welcomed the support received from the United Nations system through the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization. It welcomed the UNIFEM report entitled "Women in Mongolia: Mapping Progress under Transition", which recommended, in particular, the review of institutional mechanisms for the implementation of the national programme for the advancement of women.

48. Mongolia had also benefited from the conclusions and recommendations of the expert group meeting on the situation of rural women within the context of globalization, organized at Ulan Bator by the Division for the Advancement of Women in cooperation with UNIFEM; participants had included representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Bank. At the conclusion of the meeting, it had been recommended that Governments, research institutes and the private sector should establish the best model to ensure that rural women would be able to take advantage of information and communication technologies, in preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society. Since the conclusions and recommendations of the expert group deserved closer attention from the international community, his delegation would be submitting a draft resolution to the Committee with the other traditional sponsors.

49. **Ms. Mudie** (Australia) said that for more than half a century the international community had expressed its determination to improve the situation of women by adopting instruments and declarations that had gradually built up a solid international infrastructure for the promotion and protection of women's rights. Starting with the adoption of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952, and including the ratification by all but a small minority of States of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the international community had the necessary tools to guarantee political equality and empowerment for all women. There were still many obstacles to the effective implementation of those instruments, as had been recognized at the 1995 Beijing Conference and at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on women in 2000. On both occasions, a blueprint for action had been drawn up to overcome those obstacles and address the new challenges that affected the status of women, and it was the collective duty of the current generation of States Members of the United Nations to continue implementing the blueprint, to adapt it to the new unpredictable and challenging international environment, and to continue to move forward in the pursuit of full and equal rights for women.

50. At the international level, through the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly in June 2001, Australia had been proud to contribute to global recognition of the particular impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls and the need to empower women to protect themselves from HIV infection. In 2000, Australia had participated in the Security Council's groundbreaking debate on women, peace and security and had joined many other States in applauding the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which recognized women's critical role in conflict prevention, negotiation, peacekeeping and peace-building. Australia had subsequently made a significant contribution to the study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution, requested in resolution 1325 (2000).

51. In 2001, Australia had continued its efforts at the international level by coordinating the CANZ draft resolution on improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/C.3/56/L.22). In a text which sought, inter alia, to strengthen the representation of women throughout the system, the sponsors invited Member States to identify and regularly submit more women candidates for appointment or election to intergovernmental, expert and treaty bodies and to identify and nominate more women candidates for appointment or election as judges or other senior officials in international courts and tribunals.

52. Australia was also keen to promote and protect women's rights in the Asia-Pacific region, where it had recently hosted a regional Ministerial Meeting on HIV/AIDS. The outcome document adopted by the Ministers had recognized that women were particularly vulnerable to the epidemic owing to their poverty and illiteracy, and that their empowerment was essential in reducing that vulnerability.

53. In addition, the Government had continued its efforts to empower women in the emerging nation of neighbouring East Timor. It had welcomed the results of the 30 August 2001 elections that had seen a considerable number of women appointed to the Constituent Assembly and to various key positions in the second transitional Government. Through its assistance programme, the Government was also cooperating with the Gender Affairs Unit in mainstreaming gender into government practices. It was also pursuing capacity-building activities in East Timor for women's organizations and associations.

54. The Government attached great importance to gender mainstreaming strategies for achieving gender equality and concrete improvements in the situation of women. Accordingly, in July 2001, it had supported a CANZ resolution at the Economic and Social Council on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (Council resolution 2001/41). It had also actively supported reform of the working methods of the Commission on the Status of Women so that it might more effectively perform its catalysing role in that area.

55. Lastly, at the domestic level, the Government of Australia had developed an action plan for 2001-2005 to provide follow-up to commitments emanating from the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

56. Lastly, she wished to recall that in the context of cooperation which was vital to the realization of gender equality, Member States should make greater efforts to share with others the benefits of their experience and best practices.

57. **Mr. Gonzáles** (El Salvador), having endorsed the statements made by the representatives of Chile on behalf of the Rio Group and of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, stressed the importance that his Government attached to the advancement of women and to activities implemented at all levels to follow-up commitments emanating from the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. National policy adopted in the interests of women was designed to mainstream a gender perspective in all sectors of national life. Cognizant of the huge task still to be accomplished in order to attain the objectives enshrined in the 12 priority areas for action, the Government had redoubled its efforts to follow up and assess its work, including through the monitoring of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. It had also submitted its third, fourth and fifth periodic reports to the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

58. The national body entrusted with coordinating policy on women's issues was the Salvadoran Institute for Woman's Development, which played an important role in rehabilitation of the country in the wake of the earthquakes of early 2001. With regard to violence against women migrant workers, the Government carried out comprehensive and multidisciplinary activities. The Institute had launched a campaign to raise awareness of violence in the workplace that addressed all aspects of the problem, from adoption of relevant legislation to institutional mechanisms necessary for strengthening the protection and promotion of the basic rights of women migrant workers, including women who came to work in El Salvador and Salvadoran women who emigrated abroad.

59. With regard to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Legislative Assembly had embarked on consultations with relevant national institutions and civil society organizations in order to amass the information that would enable it to decide whether to proceed to its adoption.

60. The Government of El Salvador welcomed the fruitful collaboration under way between the Women and Development Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and other technical divisions concerned with various issues such as statistics, globalization, trade, the status of women, natural disasters and human settlements. Such collaboration had paved the way for the convening, in May 2001, of the first Statistical Conference of the Americas, at which it had been decided to establish a working group on parity indicators. It was essential that follow up should be provided to those significant initiatives in future assessments of the situation of women in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

61. The Government also wished to express its support for the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), particularly for its activities aimed at implementation of the new Gender Awareness Information and Networking System, which would enable the Institute to create, organize and publicize its activities for women throughout the world using new information technologies.

62. **Mr. Colby** (Norway) said that it was essential for both sexes to enjoy equal rights and opportunities if sustainable social and economic development was to be ensured; empowerment of women was the key to achieving that equality. Norway had every intention of contributing, both nationally and internationally, to ensuring that equality. To that end, at the national level it was concentrating its efforts on strengthening the Gender Equality Act and combating violence against women.

63. At the international level, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted at the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly stressed that equality and empowerment were fundamental elements for reducing the vulnerability of women and girls, which was further exacerbated by harmful traditional practices and sexual exploitation. International support for the education of girls was therefore vital. AIDS orphans were all too often obliged to leave school in order to care for other family members or earn their living. Although the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be held in Japan in December 2001, would discuss the various aspects of the problem, preventive measures, including health-care services, were clearly needed to protect girls from HIV infection and unwanted pregnancies.

64. A joint project undertaken by the Nordic and Baltic countries and parts of Russia had sought the active involvement of girls and boys, which had made for a better grasp of sexual relationships and a discussion of gender roles.

65. The Security Council debate on women, peace and security was a step towards full and equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making and in the implementation of peace processes, including conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. His country would fulfil its obligations under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) which had emerged from that debate. It supported the work of the United Nations Secretariat, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) among others; it had supported DPKO's work on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations and had participated in a study on the reintegration of women soldiers in Africa.

66. His delegation also welcomed the fact that the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia had for the first time defined sexual enslavement as a crime against humanity. It also urged Member States that had not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

67. Although the target of universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the end of 2000 had not been achieved, it should be pointed out that 168 Member States had ratified that instrument. His country asked those that had not yet done so to follow that example and urged States to withdraw all reservations that were incompatible with the purpose of the Convention. Where the Optional Protocol was concerned, the inquiry procedure had successfully supplemented the communications procedure.

68. His delegation encouraged all governments actively to combat breaches of human rights, particularly those that occurred in private life, such as honour killings and dowry-related violence, forced marriages, female genital mutilation and domestic violence. The United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, had shown that women were often victims of multiple discrimination and that their gender tended to reinforce various forms of discrimination based on racism.

69. **Ms. Quist** (Nigeria), associating herself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that in July 2000 her Government had adopted a National Policy on Women based on the 12 critical areas of concern established in the Beijing Platform for Action. It had also ratified a number of international conventions, including the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In that connection, Nigeria requested all States that had not yet done so to accede to or ratify the Convention.

70. Although steeped in tradition, Nigeria intended to fight the negative aspects of traditions that tended to subject women to odious practices and prejudices in marriage, divorce and widowhood. To that end, it had organized, in collaboration with UNIFEM and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), workshops aimed at sensitizing law-enforcement agencies, the judiciary and the media to the need to protect women from violence and harmful traditional practices. Some Nigerian states had already legislated against female genital mutilation. More emphasis on education should succeed in eradicating those practices, which, inter alia, increased women's vulnerability to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Early in 2001 the Nigerian Government had organized a workshop to devise a national immunization strategy. It had also allocated additional funds to the National AIDS Programme and was continuing its media campaigns throughout the country.

71. Nigeria had signed and ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, and underscored the importance of international cooperation for an effective response to that form of crime. It fully endorsed the measures to combat violence against women migrant workers contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/329), particularly the establishment of reintegration and rehabilitation schemes for women migrant workers returning to their countries of origin.

72. In recognition of the vital role played by rural women in agriculture, the Government had created a home economics unit within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and, within the agricultural coordination unit, a programme aimed at women in agriculture which disseminated information on production, processing and utilization technologies. It had also launched a poverty alleviation programme aimed in particular at establishing cottage industries. Women's cooperatives were also encouraged through microcredit loans to enhance income generation.

73. The debt burden had exacerbated the impoverishment of women and constrained the development efforts of many countries, despite such efforts at debt relief as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative. Nigeria believed that outright debt cancellation was needed to free resources essential to the development of the developing countries.

74. While globalization had brought unprecedented opportunity, it had led to further marginalization of developing countries and, combined with the effects of structural adjustment programmes, had led to greater feminization of poverty and undermined efforts to achieve gender equality. Therefore, innovative approaches must be found along with fair global rules.

75. Nigeria acknowledged the contribution of non-governmental organizations and looked forward to continuing collaboration with them. Adequate resources were essential at the national, regional and international levels to translate the commitments made by Member States into action.

76. **Ms. Yanagawa** (Japan) said that the Government of Japan, aware that the primary responsibility for advancing the status of women lay with each Government acting in cooperation with civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations, had launched in December 2000 its basic plan for a gender-equal society, founded on the Basic Law on that subject. Furthermore, as part of the reform of its institutions, a Gender Equality Bureau had been created within the Prime Minister's Cabinet, in addition to a new Council for Gender Equality. Currently, there were five women ministers, and for the first time, a female Minister for Foreign Affairs. In addition, the Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims had entered into force on 13 October 2001.

77. The Government of Japan attached great importance to the protection of women in armed conflict, since many refugees and displaced persons were women and children. It had contributed $120 million in assistance to the Afghan people. Believing that women could also play an important role in bringing to justice those who committed atrocities in the course of armed conflict, it welcomed the election of a Japanese member of the Committee on the

Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as an ad litem judge of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

78. The Government of Japan was funding programmes in such areas as literacy, vocational education, health care and microfinance through the Japanese Women in Development Fund within the framework of UNDP. It had also financed various programmes to enhance the rights of women in developing countries through the UNIFEM Trust Fund in support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. In addition, a substantial amount of Japanese bilateral official development assistance had been utilized to promote the participation of women in development. Lastly, the Japanese Government had pledged $200 million to the global fund to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria that would be established in the near future.

79. **Ms. Afifi** (Morocco), endorsing the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that concerted, multidimensional strategies and measures, calling for a mobilization of funds and a productive use of human resources, had to be adopted nationally and internationally in order to ensure equality between men and women and a genuine participation by women in development and the strengthening of peace. Certainly, the major international conferences and forums had helped to define the action that needed to be taken in that respect.

80. Despite considerable improvement in de jure gender equality, the participation of women was still limited when it came to political decision-making, conflict prevention and resolution, the economy, the environment or the media, and their under-representation was still more marked in the poor countries, especially in Africa, where women had been marginalized by various social problems, internal conflicts, the AIDS pandemic and the inadequacy of basic social services.

81. Since its independence, Morocco itself had made it one of the priorities of its development policy to improve the status of women, out of an awareness that only by integrating women into the process of national development could the country meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. For that reason, it had brought its legislation into line with its international commitments and had incorporated a gender focus into the objectives of its five-year economic and social development plan for the period 1999-2003, especially in the fields of health and education. That policy had borne fruit, because now a large number of women held various high-level posts. The national strategy launched by Morocco to integrate women into development was the result of a partnership among the different government departments and the various civil society institutions, especially the non-governmental organizations. In April 2001, the Government had set up an advisory commission to reform the family code. After much discussion several political groups had taken decisions to increase the representation of women within their party leaderships and among their candidates for local, regional and national assemblies, which, by the time of the legislative elections in September 2002, should enable women to be better represented at all levels.

82. Her delegation underscored the importance of the role played by the United Nations bodies dealing with the advancement of women and thanked them for their support and productive cooperation.

83. **Ms. Arias** (Peru), supporting the statements made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Chile on behalf of the Rio Group, said that her Government regarded equal status and equal opportunities for women as a prerequisite for human development, and that it was the principle which inspired the action it took nationally, regionally and internationally to achieve greater recognition of the rights of women. At the regional level, the instruments and principles adopted in connection with the Regional Mechanism on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, over which Peru was currently presiding, offered the basis for action on behalf of women. Moreover, on the occasion of the Americas Summit held in Quebec in April 2001, the countries of the region had reaffirmed their commitment to put an end to all forms of discrimination, promote equality between the sexes and achieve full and complete participation by all in political, economic, social and cultural life. Peru was determined to work within that framework to guarantee gender equality and enact a range of norms promoting national policies likely to ensure equal opportunities for both women and men in all fields, especially health, employment and participation in politics and society.

84. At the national level, her Government, whose main priorities were poverty eradication, job creation and the full observance of human rights, was studying

a plan of action for social justice and the elimination of poverty whose centrepiece was gender parity. It was working with international cooperation agencies and civil society organizations to develop a strategy to ensure the well-being of the Peruvian people based on literacy, health and food security.

85. In the area of health, the goals were to reduce maternal and infant mortality; reduce the proportion of premature pregnancies; improve services for victims of domestic and sexual violence and combat such violence more effectively; and reduce the incidence of sexually-transmitted diseases. Mention should also be made of a number of steps Peru had taken as part of its 1998-2002 national population plan, relating to male and female sexual and genetic health; greater equality between the sexes in the field of health; the sexual education of adolescents; and the right of men and women to make free and informed decisions about the number and spacing of their children.

86. A further objective was to reduce chronic malnutrition among children and guarantee food security for groups who were at risk or extremely poor. Specific programmes had also been designed to promote effective, equitable and sustainable development for vulnerable members of the population, particularly those who had been victims of the country's past violence.

87. The national authorities were assessing the needs of older and disabled women with a view to carrying out specific programmes and awareness-raising campaigns. Adult women often had less access to education and hence were less qualified for employment; they were therefore more likely to be dependent, as well as poor and susceptible to disease brought on by malnutrition during the later stages of their lives. The current Government therefore intended to follow a policy aimed at guaranteeing that they had access to appropriate health and social security services and enjoyed a decent lifestyle which would permit them to engage in physical, intellectual, emotional and social activity.

88. **Ms. Siddharth** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that, despite the strength of the international policy and legal framework for the empowerment of women, the signs of increasing female poverty were alarming. In many countries, the combination of unequal access to resources and negative global and local economic trends continued to endanger progress towards gender equalization. For example, women were paid less than men for equal work. The advances achieved in communications and information technology, which was the theme of the ILO World Employment Report 2001, offered many opportunities for women. However, such advances should be supported by policies which ensured participation, education and training, as well as family-friendly policies in the workplace. Between October 2001 and April 2002, ILO would be conducting its first gender audit to review the implementation of its gender mainstreaming policy.

89. ILO was pursuing a concerted strategy to implement the recommendations of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing+5). Women were not only a marginalized group but were also prominent among the ageing, youth, the disabled, indigenous peoples, refugees, migrants and those coping with HIV/AIDS. Poverty contributed significantly to vulnerability to the impact of HIV/AIDS and since women constituted the majority of the world's poor, they were severely affected by the pandemic. Their work in many countries, often in the informal sector, was characterized by the absence of income security, social protection, social security, property rights, access to health facilities and protective labour legislation. The ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work, which addressed the specific needs of women, had been adopted in June 2001. ILO programmes also aimed fully to reflect gender implications, extending to reintegration, reconstruction, demobilization of ex-combatants, the rehabilitation of infrastructure, training, microenterprise and the establishment of suitable social protection systems.

90. ILO believed that, excluding refugees and asylum seekers, some 90 million individuals worldwide, about half of them women, were migrants. The 1939 ILO recommendation on migrant workers (No. 61), revised in 1949 (No. 86) and 1975 (No. 151) addressed the working conditions of migrants and encouraged States to provide adequate sanctions against the abuses or malpractice to which migrants were subjected. The ILO International Labour Migration Database sought to record the flows of migrant workers and compile information on their living and working conditions, as well as on their treatment under national laws and rules. Since 1996, a specific mechanism had enabled ILO to review cases where female migrants were repeatedly exposed to serious and widespread violation of their rights.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/56/SR.15

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 18 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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01-58723 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 27: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/C.3/56/L.11)

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.11 entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly"

1. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution contained no programme-budget implications.

2. **Ms. Leyton** (Chile), speaking as the principal sponsor of the draft resolution, said that the following additional countries wished to sponsor the draft resolution: Armenia, Australia, Barbados, Belize, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Estonia, Fiji, Guinea, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Malta, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

3. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.11 was adopted.*

4. Subsequently, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Togo indicated that, if they had been present when draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.11 had been adopted, they would have joined the sponsors.

Agenda item 108: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/56/L.2, L.7 and L.9)

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.2 entitled "Preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family", and the amendments contained in document A/C.3/56/L.7

5. **Ms. Newell** (Secretary of the Committee) read out the corrections, which the representative of Benin had made orally when document A/C.3/56/L.7 had been introduced.

6. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution contained no programme-budget implications.

7. **Ms. Elisha** (Benin), speaking as the principal sponsor, said that the following additional countries wished to sponsor the draft resolution: Argentina, Belarus, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guinea, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Nicaragua, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone and Suriname.

8. *Document A/C.3/56/L.7, as orally corrected, was adopted.*

9. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.2, as amended, was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.9 entitled "Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: towards a society for all in the twenty-first century"

10. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution contained no programme-budget implications.

11. **Ms. Newell** (Secretary of the Committee) said it would be recalled that, when introducing the draft resolution, the representative of the Philippines had orally corrected the text.

12. **Ms. Garcia** (Philippines), speaking as the principal sponsor, said that the following countries also wished to sponsor the draft resolution: Andorra, Armenia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Eritrea, Georgia, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Iceland, Jamaica, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, the Republic of Moldova, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, South Africa, the Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Zimbabwe.

13. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.9, as orally corrected, was adopted.*

Agenda item 109: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/C.3/56/L.3, L.13 and L.14)

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.3 entitled "United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing"

14. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution had been recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption and had no programme-budget implications.

15. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.3 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.13 entitled "Arrangements regarding participation of non-governmental organizations in the Second World Assembly on Ageing"

16. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution had been recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption and had no programme-budget implications.

17. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.13 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.14 entitled "Provisional rules of procedure for the Second World Assembly on Ageing"

18. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution had been recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption and had no programme-budget implications.

19. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.14 was adopted.*

Agenda item 112: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/56/3, A/56/38/Rev.1, A/565/174, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/268, 279, 306, 316, 328, 329 and 472)

Agenda item 113: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/306, A/56/319 and Add.1)

20. **Mr. Leal Cordeiro** (Angola) said that, despite the focus of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, gender inequalities remained a reality. It was his delegation's hope that the gender perspective would continue to be reflected in 2002 in the outcome of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the special session of the General Assembly on children and the International Conference on Financing for Development. He urged policy makers to highlight the financial situation of women in the outcome document to be submitted at that Conference; without that emphasis, economic disparities between men and women were unlikely to lessen.

21. The Government of Angola supported the recent adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on the right of petition, which would not only decrease discrimination but also provide a solid foundation for legal solutions to violations.

22. Angola was experiencing the dire effects of the ongoing internal conflict. The current lack of food supplies was even more devastating in rural areas, where women accounted for 30 per cent of heads of households. In the context of the Government's earmarking of aid for basic needs, the Ministry for Family and Women's Affairs had organized the second National Conference on Rural Women. Despite the conflict, a significant number of internally displaced persons and refugees — some 70 per cent of whom were women — had been relocated and given capital through microcredit programmes and farming supplies as part of the National Programme on the Advancement of Women. Some of the programmes, however, had suffered from financial problems and the lack of a peaceful environment.

23. The Government had agreed to collaborate with the Pan-African Women's Organization and the Angolan Women's Organization in organizing an international conference on poverty and its effects on women, to be held in Luanda in November 2001 with the objective of identifying new approaches to fighting poverty at the start of the new millennium.

24. The mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policies required the full engagement of Governments, the international community and civil society, together with close cooperation among international actors and a steady stream of accurate data to illustrate gender disparities and reflect the results of new policy measures.

25. **Ms. Afifi** (Morocco) said that her Government had taken action for the advancement of women in several areas. Among its top priorities were safe motherhood and the accessibility of family-planning services. Better primary health care would help to reduce maternal mortality by a targeted 30 per cent by 2005. Another priority area was education, with targets set for 2005 of a girls' school enrolment of 70 per cent and a reduction of 50 per cent in illiteracy among rural women.

26. Women's economic and social status would be improved through appropriate job-training programmes and access to microcredit and capital. Human-rights education, including dissemination of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, was planned in order to raise their

awareness of their fundamental rights and the mechanisms available to protect them from violations of those rights. Women's associations were also working with the relevant government ministries to develop a strategy to combat violence against women and girls.

27. She noted in conclusion that the partnership and support of the United Nations system had been essential to her Government's efforts to improve the status of women.

28. **Mr. Al-Ketbi** (United Arab Emirates), said that despite the social, economic and technological progress of the past decade, women, particularly in the developing countries, continued to face problems related to ill health, poverty, marginalization, violence and ignorance. Two thirds of all illiterate people throughout the world were women and they suffered particularly from ill health associated with poverty and lack of health care.

29. The 1995 Beijing Conference, which had identified 12 critical areas of concern in relation to the status of women, had been a turning point in worldwide efforts to improve women's status and enhance their role in development. However, the increasing economic and social disparity between the developed and developing countries, and the developing countries' lack of reliable sources of funding, had prevented them from giving effect to their national plans based on the Beijing Platform. His delegation therefore called on the international community, particularly the developed countries, and on international funding agencies such as the World Bank, to increase their assistance to the developing countries, particularly those that were giving particular attention to the needs of women and the family.

30. His delegation also emphasized the necessity of enhancing the crucial role played by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in development and in the implementation of the recommendations of its major conferences for enhancement of the cultural, social and economic status of women throughout the world. The activities of the United Nations Development Fund should also be strengthened, particularly in the field of research and studies, and in the implementation of development assistance projects in the poorest regions, particularly those suffering from the effects of war or occupation. The many problems faced by women and the family in those areas should be taken into account together with the nature and specificities of individual societies, particularly their traditions, customs and religious and social values.

31. His own country had enacted many laws and put in place arrangements to safeguard the legal rights of women with respect to property, access to education at all levels, training, health care and social services. It had also encouraged women to enter the labour market in both the private and public sectors, and to participate in all aspects of national development activities. The social-security provisions ensured that, in their capacity as wives and mothers, they were fully protected both financially and in terms of social services. Because of the Government's commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, it was concentrating on human development for women, integrating them in national development plans and programmes and in regional and international activities. It was also ensuring that they were involved in decision-making in ministries and institutions on the same basis as men.

32. In conclusion, he expressed concern at the sufferings of millions of women and children in many regions of conflict, in particular those in the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied by Israel who were facing assassination, violence, brutality, arrests, starvation, the destruction of their houses, the confiscation of their land, and expulsion by the occupying forces. Such actions were a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions, the rules of international humanitarian law and of human-rights instruments, foremost among which was the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949.

33. His delegation appealed to the international community to face up to its responsibilities with respect to the situation of Palestinian women, in particular by exerting greater pressure on the Israeli Government to end its occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories, including Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and to seek a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region in order to ensure security, peace and stability for all peoples in the region.

34. **Ms. Kapalata** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that, although government policy recognized the contribution and responsibility of both genders, the Women and Gender Development Policy adopted in 2000 laid emphasis on issues relating specifically to women. The policy aimed: to empower women to

overcome poverty; to highlight their contribution to the development of the family, society and nation and to fully recognize their rights; to underscore the value of both parents in their children's upbringing; and to accelerate national development by promoting gender equality. The Government recognized that the key to bridging the gap between its aspirations and achievements in those areas involved scrupulous implementation of relevant international commitments. Poverty, HIV/AIDS and persistent conflict in the subregion were the main factors hampering its efforts.

35. Modest progress had nonetheless been achieved in priority areas. Expanded educational opportunities (including the provision, since January 2001, of free basic education for all) had increased girl-pupil enrolment to nearly 45 per cent. In addition, the political and legal empowerment of women had been enhanced through training, the revision of discriminatory legislation and the promulgation of new laws. Women's representation in Parliament had, moreover, been increased from 15 to 20 per cent, the eventual target being 30 per cent representation by 2005. Furthermore, to alleviate the burden of poverty on women, the Government provided them with microcredit and had strengthened social services for women and girls. In all those endeavours, inter-agency and bilateral support had been much appreciated.

36. In view of the importance of addressing the precarious situation of rural women in developing countries, her delegation particularly welcomed the recommendations of the expert group meeting on the situation of rural women in the context of globalization, recently held at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. With regard to HIV/AIDS, her delegation supported the concept that women were central to prevention and to identifying sustainable solutions to the pandemic. Lastly, her delegation wished to reiterate its appeal for a concerted effort to promote gender parity within the Secretariat.

37. **Ms. Ivashchenko** (Ukraine), having welcomed the efforts of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to integrate a gender perspective into their plans of action, said that her own Government's plan of action for the advancement of women (2001-2005) took account of the needs of women in various sectors and aimed to strengthen gender policies in public institutions. Women and civil society were fully involved in the process. National policy sought to promote women's economic rights and to enhance their participation in political decision-making. Attention was also given to reproductive health care and safe-motherhood programmes, and to the eradication of violence against women.

38. A presidential decree on the advancement of the social status of women in Ukraine had been issued in 2001, and a programme to combat trafficking in women and children established. Despite such efforts, however, full gender mainstreaming in all sectors of society had yet to be achieved. With the national economy in transition, the status of women was currently in a process of adjustment. The Government was fully cognizant, however, of the measures it must implement to attain the full realization of women's rights in Ukraine. Its efforts would continue to be guided by the international standards to which it had subscribed.

39. **Ms. Deggeller** (Netherlands) said that conflict prevention, poverty eradication and the advancement of women were closely interconnected. Moreover, given that gender inequality hampered development efforts, development policies must incorporate the empowerment of women. In the aftermath of conflicts, an integrated approach to development was particularly vital. Nor must it be forgotten that it was women who often took the initiative to curb the use of violence in conflict situations. It was a matter of concern, therefore, that the marked absence of women in the Kosovo peace negotiations had served to perpetuate their marginalization in the political process following conflicts. It was indeed crucial that women's potential was recognized at the earliest stages of conflict management.

40. With the requisite foreign support, women's groups could contribute significantly to peace-building in their own countries. Her delegation could provide details of recommendations of national and international women's organizations which complemented the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809) (the Brahimi report). In particular, training should be provided to peacekeeping forces in accordance with the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (S/2000/693). The Government of the Netherlands, for its part, would be contributing $100,000 to that end. Drawing attention to one success story in respect of gender mainstreaming, she said that, of the first police

trainers to graduate from the Kosovo Police Service School established by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 19 per cent had been women — a high proportion compared to most European countries.

41. Women must be empowered to shape their own lives and societies. To that end, the international community must fully implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

42. **Mr. Coimbra** (Brazil) said that the United Nations had been at the forefront of efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The cycle of conferences dedicated to women's issues, in conjunction with other major world conferences, had created a solid conceptual basis and a series of commitments that had served as inspiration for the elaboration of national laws and policies. He also paid tribute to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

43. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), for its part, had become an increasingly important partner in his Government's efforts to promote the advancement of women. As evidence of the successful enhancement of women's participation in Brazilian politics, the quota of 30 per cent women electoral candidates in 2000 had been realized, with 317 female mayors having been elected (including six in the state capitals) and 200 women having taken office in local councils.

44. To improve the status of rural women, a government programme gave land tenure titles preferentially to women and provided opportunities for microcredit, technical assistance and social security, including maternity and retirement benefits.

45. The reduction of infant and maternal mortality was also a continuing priority, with free health-care services provided for all. Health programmes for women and girls in Brazil focused, inter alia, on early motherhood, family planning, sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Support was also provided to victims of sexual and domestic violence in special facilities located throughout the country. Education continued to be viewed as a key instrument for the eradication of poverty and for promoting the advancement of women. Girls and women currently represented half of all enrolments at every educational level.

46. Convinced that equality and the full realization of women's rights were an essential ingredient of democracy, his Government remained committed to providing an enabling environment for the empowerment of Brazilian women.

47. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino) said that in many parts of the world, cultural and traditional practices still limited women's freedom. In San Marino, however, the path toward gender equality had been relatively easy. Because of favourable economic conditions, women's participation in both the public and private sectors was significant. Wage equality between male and female workers had been achieved, as had equality in educational opportunity. With regard to equality before the law, the Parliament had recently passed a law which had begun to remedy the gap between men and women in the transmission of nationality.

48. Achieving gender balance must be a priority for all countries, and her delegation would support any reference to gender balance in the work of the Committee, in the hope of raising awareness of the issue among the public and Governments. The increase in violence against women was also a matter of concern, and her delegation welcomed the efforts being made within the European Union to address its causes. Her delegation was convinced of the need to change attitudes towards traditional and customary practices affecting the health of women and girls, to distinguish between a people's valued traditions and distortions and violations of rights. Once again, education to change perceptions, was the solution.

49. Her Government believed that good legislation, achieved through negotiation, dialogue and international cooperation, was the best way to achieve the advancement of women, and it was ready to contribute in any way possible to that cause.

50. **Miss Durrant** (Jamaica) said that the goals of gender equality and the promotion of women's rights remained primary challenges in the global effort to achieve sustainable development and peace. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, women's participation in economic activity had increased, and gender perspectives were increasingly being reflected in actions at the global level. However, the systemic inequities characterizing the situation of women

remained deeply entrenched. Without a comprehensive approach to the social, economic and cultural disadvantages faced by women, change would fall far short of the ambitious targets set at the Beijing Conference and at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

51. While the global record of implementation included commendable achievements, it also demonstrated several areas of weakness. The persistent disparities between women and men in health, education, employment and human rights were further compounded by globalization, which had the potential to erode economic and social gains. Women must have equal access to information and communications technologies to aid in their empowerment, and Governments must ensure that gender was taken into account in all policy areas. Her delegation was pleased that among the issues highlighted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had been the feminization of poverty and the differing effects of globalization, trade liberalization and external debt on men and women.

52. Other urgent challenges included an increase in trafficking in women and girls and other forms of exploitation as a result of transnational organized crime, women's increasing risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, and gender-based violence. The active participation of women at all levels of decision-making would be required to combat those problems. Progress was being made, however: Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women in armed conflict was a clear recognition of their role in conflict prevention and resolution. Her delegation also welcomed the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and other agencies to ensure that gender mainstreaming remained a priority within the United Nations system.

53. For its part, Jamaica, through its National Bureau of Women's Affairs, had initiated several programmes to address such issues as poverty eradication, violence against women, education and training, along with a review of its legislation. The empowerment of women in rural communities, the provision of microcredit, improving conditions for household workers and greater access to basic health care for all women represent important pillars of its efforts to advance the welfare of women.

54. **Ms. Limpias Chávez** (Bolivia) said that the areas of special concern listed in the Beijing Platform for Action continued to be priorities for Bolivia, and the Government had designed development policies aimed at promoting gender equality. An area of great importance to a multi-cultural country like Bolivia was rural development and the status of rural and indigenous women, and a new amendment to the law on agrarian reform recognized the need for equality for women, regardless of civil status, in distribution, administration, ownership and access to land. Family violence was another area of concern, and the national plan of action on violence against women provided for special training for members of the legal system in dealing with its victims. The educational-reform programme also included components aimed at the needs of rural and indigenous women. The national maternal- and child-health programme contained aspects relating to sexual and reproductive health and family planning, and provided guidance to women in taking decisions on their own sexuality and motherhood.

55. The high rates of poverty in Bolivia resulting from inequality and exclusion had continued to worsen over the past decade. Marginalization was not limited to economic level or social class, but was also related to ethnic group and gender. Nevertheless, the Government had continued to stress the need to incorporate a gender perspective into all social-development activities, in particular poverty eradication. Since the feminization of poverty affected rural and indigenous women most severely, the dynamics of the rural economy must be understood in order to reorient policies to enhance their participation in the economic, social and political spheres. A number of economic and social projects carried out with international assistance had incorporated a gender perspective.

56. Although it was the responsibility of the Government to include the gender perspective in all its policies, society as a whole must work to ensure that women had access to education and health care, were not excluded from rural-development and poverty-eradication efforts, and could live free of all forms of violence.

57. **Mr. Ahmad** (Iraq) said that the advancement of women could be achieved only within the framework of a comprehensive approach to human rights, taking into account economic, social and political circumstances. In his own country, women had, over the centuries, acquired rights and privileges that were

sanctioned by custom and enshrined in law. The Government had enacted legislation that gave substance to the provisions of Islamic law and was consistent with Iraq's cultural and humanitarian heritage, and ensured women's rights to health, education and participation in political life and in activities to improve their economic and social status. Iraq had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been incorporated in national law. The Government had also taken steps to fulfil its obligations in terms of the Beijing Platform for Action by establishing a national strategy for the advancement of women and by setting up a high-level national committee for that purpose, responsible for devising policies and establishing mechanisms for their implementation.

58. The Government had also established specialized committees for the advancement of women in official establishments and professional organizations and had given an impetus to the activities of non-governmental organizations concerned with women's affairs, in particular the General Federation of Iraqi Women, and had convened many national and international conferences to discuss the status of women.

59. The progress attained by Iraqi women had, however, been undermined by the continuing blockade maintained against Iraq for the past 11 years, which had resulted in the collapse of the infrastructure and had impaired all aspects of the life of Iraqi society, particularly children and women. That had been confirmed in reports issued by international organizations working in Iraq such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

60. The environmental pollution caused by the use by the allied forces of depleted-uranium weapons had given rise to medical problems among women, including sterility, genetic malformation and cancer.

61. The Government had reported on the status of women in Iraq to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its second and third periodic reports, which had been considered in June 2000. The Committee had noted that the sanctions and the embargo had impeded the advancement of women and had stated that the situation was an obstacle to full implementation of the Convention. It had also commended the Government for its political will to implement the Convention and for the legislative measures it had taken in that connection, in particular the establishment of the high-level National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women and of a national strategy for the advancement of women.

62. In conclusion, he said that it was incumbent on the international community to show concern for the suffering inflicted on his country, which was a human tragedy amounting to genocide and was a violation of all relevant human-rights instruments.

63. **Ms. Alvarez** (Dominican Republic), confining her remarks to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), recalled that in 1999 the United Nations Secretariat had proposed the introduction of the Gender Awareness Information and Networking System in order to revitalize that body. Although the Institute had successfully adopted the new methodology, its very survival was threatened by the lack of financial support required to correct its structural difficulties. In order to alleviate the situation, the General Assembly, in decision 55/457, had approved a supplement of up to $800,000 to allow INSTRAW to cover its operations in 2001. The Institute's difficulties had continued, however, owing to the low level of voluntary contributions to its Trust Fund. Consequently, in its resolution 2001/40, the Economic and Social Council had recommended that the General Assembly should consider certain arrangements to fund the Institute's operations temporarily and to consider requesting the Joint Inspection Unit to review the Trust Fund and make an urgent evaluation of the Institute's activities..

64. The Government of the Dominican Republic, as the host country, deemed it urgent that the United Nations should consider practical options to allow the Institute to function in a sustainable form. Restructuring had not been part of past efforts to revitalize INSTRAW, which had simply adopted a new working method and progressively reduced its personnel. An evaluation of the Institute's structural problems was urgently needed, together with the identification of sources of funding and the level of support required for its effective functioning.

65. Since INSTRAW was the only entity within the United Nations system dedicated to research, training and information dissemination on women and gender issues, and was therefore of particular importance for

developing countries, the concerted efforts of Member States, the host country and the United Nations Secretariat were essential if it was to regain its institutional strength.

66. **Mr. Laurin** (Canada), noting that gender equality was relevant to all the work of the United Nations, said that Canada had introduced draft resolutions on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand in the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, identifying new mechanisms to assess progress in implementing the Council's agreed conclusions and, inter alia, calling for a future coordination segment of the Council to follow up those conclusions.

67. Progress had been made in improving the status of women in the United Nations system. His Government strongly supported the Secretary-General's recommendation for gender experts in the office of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. The achievement of 50/50 gender balance in the system, however, still fell short of the target. Member States had an important role to play in nominating more female candidates for election to United Nations bodies.

68. Member States could be proud of progress towards gender equality, which included Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and his delegation supported efforts to integrate its provisions into United Nations day-to-day activities. It also supported the pivotal roles of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and UNIFEM in focusing on the implementation of the resolution. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol were important mechanisms for making progress. However, universal ratification had not yet been achieved and implementation was hampered by the large number of reservations that were contrary to the purpose of the Convention.

69. **Mr. Paclisanu** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that ICRC had repeatedly expressed concern about the situation of women in humanitarian emergencies. At the twenty-seventh International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, ICRC had pledged to promote respect for women in armed conflict. It had just published a study on the impact of war on women, based on its experience, entitled *Women Facing War*.

70. The study showed that women's experience of war ranged from taking an active part as combatants to being targeted as members of the civilian population; it entailed separation, loss of family and livelihood, risk of sexual violence, wounding, deprivation and death. Women faced war with courage and resilience applied to unfamiliar roles; it was therefore of capital importance to involve them in measures taken to protect and assist them. The generally accepted limits to warfare were frequently breached and experience had shown that women's safety was not guaranteed by the respect due to them. A major challenge was how to secure respect for the distinction between civilians and combatants in war so as to prevent further widening of the scope of violence. Existing norms of humanitarian law provided adequate coverage of the needs of women in situations of armed conflict; mechanisms for enforcing rights and redressing violations were therefore of crucial importance. Recent developments, nationally and internationally, in the prosecution of those responsible for war crimes were an important step in the fight against impunity.

71. While ICRC was committed to assisting and protecting women, improving the lot of women in times of war was everyone's responsibility. It was time for international humanitarian law to be put into practice.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/56/SR.16

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Chairman: Mr. Al-Haini ..... (Oman)

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01-59158 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/56/3, A/56/38/Rev.1, A/56/174, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/268, A/56/279, A/56/306, A/56/316, A/56/328, A/56/329 and A/56/472)

Agenda item 113: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/306 and A/56/319 and Add.1)

1. **Mr. Hadjiargyrou** (Cyprus) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, with whose positions it fully agreed.

2. His Government shared the belief that the elimination of discrimination against women constituted an integral part of the struggle for social development and social justice, and was pursuing policies designed to lead to a gender-sensitive society, with the ultimate goal of full equality. While it recognized the importance of international cooperation, his delegation nonetheless believed that the advancement of women's rights was primarily the responsibility of Governments.

3. In that context, his delegation emphasized the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and wished to announce that, following the adoption in 1999 of a law which removed a provision that had discriminated against women with regard to the nationality of their children, his Government had withdrawn the sole reservation against the Convention that it had maintained since ratifying it in 1985. It had also signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention, in February 2001, and Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and had adopted two laws, one relating to violence in the family and the other to sexual exploitation, trafficking in human beings and child pornography.

4. His Government was determined to increase the participation of women in decision-making and politics, with the goal of a minimum of 30 per cent representation of women, as set by the Beijing Platform for Action. It had therefore organized special training programmes aimed at encouraging women to enter politics and at creating a more friendly environment for women within political parties; set up a cross-political citizens' group to lobby and campaign for equal representation of women and men in politics; sensitized the mass media to support that cause; appointed women to high-ranking political posts; and launched a campaign to support women candidates.

5. The women of Cyprus, having suffered the consequences of military conflict, displacement and foreign occupation over the past 27 years, played an active part in conflict resolution and the peace process. Their activities included training programmes on conflict resolution and global environmental sensitivity and they also devoted much effort to raising awareness of the Cyprus political problem and to bringing together Greek and Turkish Cypriot women.

6. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka) said that he endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

7. Women in Sri Lanka had always enjoyed equality with men and participated in decision-making in the home and in society at large. They had presented the world with its first woman Prime Minister in 1960 and currently exercised the presidency of the country in the person of Madam Kumaratunga.

8. Women provided financial inputs into the economy and were active in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, in business and in academia. His country's development policy and its investment in education and health had resulted in a high level of health standards and literacy among the population, benefiting both girls and boys equally.

9. However, some problems remained in Sri Lanka, as elsewhere. In order to eliminate them, Governments must meet their responsibility for implementing the decisions taken at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The international community, including the United Nations, as well as civil society, had a crucial role to play in that regard.

10. In its commitment to ending discrimination against women, the Government of Sri Lanka had created institutional structures to deal with women's issues and organized workshops on gender-responsive

policy formulation and analysis. The National Committee on Women was charged with the responsibility for implementing the provisions of the Women's Charter adopted in 1993. The National Plan of Action put in place after the Beijing Conference continued to be implemented and was reviewed periodically, taking into account the new challenges that arose.

11. Bearing in mind that violence against women formed the core of gender-based inequalities and hindered the development and well-being of women, the Government of Sri Lanka had, among other policy and legislative measures, made amendments to the Penal Code, adding new offences, such as sexual harassment and marital rape, and increasing the penalties for sex-related offences. Non-governmental organizations also played a vital role in the advancement of women both individually and in collaborative efforts with Government agencies.

12. Desiring to see action taken, both nationally and internationally, against all forms of transnational crime that particularly affected women, Sri Lanka had become a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

13. Globalization had resulted in the marginalization of the developing countries in the world economy. The worsening economic conditions it had brought had not only widened the gap between rich and poor, but had particularly affected women. In the struggle against poverty, especially among women, the need for a more enabling international environment with shared responsibilities was compelling.

14. **Mrs. Kidanu** (Ethiopia) endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

15. Despite the efforts made within the United Nations to encourage Governments to ensure that women participated fully in the economic, social, cultural and political activities of their countries, many women remained victims of poverty, sexual harassment, violence and employment inequality, as well as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The United Nations and the international community should intensify their efforts towards the implementation of the decisions taken at the Beijing Conference and the special sessions of the General Assembly on women and HIV/AIDS, and to ensure that the key contribution of women in all spheres, from the struggle against poverty to the promotion of peace, was duly recognized.

16. Her Government, desiring to improve the situation of Ethiopian women, had incorporated the pertinent provisions of the various United Nations conventions and of other international instruments into the Federal Constitutions and into its policies and legislation, and was continuing to amend the relevant laws with the objective of improving the status of women. The Government was working to reduce poverty among women by enabling them to have fair access to economic resources such as land, credit and other facilities, with the support of non-governmental organizations which organized income-generating activities and provided economic assistance to poor women. Funds for building the institutional capacity of regional and communal women's organizations were being put in place. In addition, the Government, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations and women's groups were joining efforts in the campaign against the increased danger of HIV/AIDS. The National Council on HIV/AIDS had the task of providing support to women and children to enable them to protect themselves and of giving timely assistance to those already infected. The education and training policy was aimed at increasing the rate of female enrolment in schools so as to bridge the gap between male and female enrolment. The participation of women in Parliament had increased, and women had been appointed to high public offices previously dominated by men.

17. The Ethiopian Government was endeavouring to eliminate all forms of violence against women through legislative measures and to raise the awareness of the public with regard to the constitutional rights of women. Women's associations and other concerned bodies had been campaigning for tougher action to be taken with regard to any form of violence committed against women.

18. Ethiopia was determined to improve the situation of women, but, like all developing countries, it was faced with economic constraints. In its efforts to attain that goal, it was counting on the cooperation and financial support of the international community.

19. **Ms. Fritsche** (Liechtenstein) said that the most important recent event for women had perhaps been the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS which had agreed on the need for women to take decisions on their sexuality as a means of successfully combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

20. In the field of law, the most encouraging event had been the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which his country would ratify on 24 October, United Nations Day. The Protocol would play an essential role in promoting awareness of women's rights and in their implementation. The international community should take the Protocol as a basis for achieving gender equality, development and peace, which had been the objectives of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on women and were more relevant than ever since there could be no sustainable peace or development without gender equality. Those issues therefore belonged on the agenda of all United Nations activities not only those of the Third Committee.

21. Women should also cease to be regarded as victims and be seen as full participants in all areas. That mental reorientation was taking place although, unfortunately, very slowly; as a result, women were increasingly regarded as key players not only in development but also in conflict prevention and settlement and peace-building, as the Security Council had recognized in its resolution 1325 (2000).

22. The situation in Afghanistan was an extreme example of the exclusion of women from decision-making, in which the presence and participation of women in peace negotiations would be of the utmost importance, as the women representing that country at the United Nations had recently pointed out to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

23. She strongly believed that the appointment of women as special representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General could play a catalytic role and that the United Nations should set an example in that respect. The women ambassadors to the United Nations would continue to place particular emphasis on that point in their contacts with the Secretary-General and appreciated the increasing support they received from their male colleagues in their endeavours. Conversely, the appointment of a man to serve on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the fact that the Commission on the Status of Women had placed the role of men and boys in the advancement of women high on its agenda, were to be welcomed. She also paid tribute to the decision by the United Kingdom delegation to bring together a group of countries that had resolved to work for gender mainstreaming within the United Nations, bearing in mind the leading role that women were being increasingly called on to play in that field.

24. **Mr. Niehaus** (Costa Rica), speaking on agenda item 112, associated himself with the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and with that made by the Chilean delegation on behalf of the Rio Group.

25. His country had adopted laws against conjugal violence and to reform its judicial system in order to protect women, from childhood, against all forms of violence. For example, in 1998 the Women's National Institute, responsible for elaborating guidelines to promote gender equality, had been established, and a law creating standing committees on the status of women in local decision-making bodies and provisions granting assistance to women living in poverty had been adopted. In addition, the political parties were obliged to accord 40 per cent of the places to women in their lists for municipal and legislative elections. More recently, the law known as the Responsible Fatherhood Act, which was very important in that it established a special unprecedented legal regime and directly linked the advancement of women to the protection of children, had been adopted. It obliged the father of a child born out of wedlock to contribute to the cost of the child's education and upbringing and, in the event of his refusing to do so, could force him to comply through a judicial ruling except where the man concerned could prove by means of a DNA test that he was not the father. In addition, the recent ratification by his country of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had further supplemented the legal arrangements established in Costa Rica, as had the creation of a legislative commission dealing exclusively with women's issues which considered draft laws and international conventions aimed at enhancing the status of women.

26. Equality between men and women or, better still, complementarity and mutual assistance between men and women, were essential to the establishment of a

society that respected the fundamental rights of all citizens, particularly the right to development and social welfare.

27. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) associated herself with the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

28. Poverty, violence, fundamental rights and armed conflicts were issues of particular importance to Palestinian women. Accordingly, they endeavoured to implement the recommendations of major conferences concerning women's rights so that they could play a more decisive role at all levels and in all fields. Palestinian women continued to struggle to achieve freedom, peace and prosperity in the face of the harsh reality of the continuing Israeli occupation, and to fight inequality and discrimination within their own society. The main obstacle, however, continued to be the oppressive Israeli policies and measures which impeded their socio-economic progress and thus prevented them from enhancing their status. It had therefore been very difficult for them to promote a viable and comprehensive plan of action. They had also suffered from the confiscation of land and water resources, the expansion of settlements, the restriction of movement and the closure of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Moreover, the indiscriminate use of excessive force against Palestinian civilians by the Israelis had aggravated the situation on the ground, causing over 680 deaths, many of them children, and over 25,000 injured among Palestinian civilians, to say nothing of the devastation and destruction of land, homes and infrastructure.

29. Those obstacles had not prevented Palestinian women from pursuing initiatives and promoting national programmes of action geared towards their full participation in the building of society. Thus, they had helped to establish the foundations for the social, economic and institutional development of a future Palestinian State, including the educational, health and economic infrastructure, while bearing in mind the issue of gender. They had played a role in mainstreaming women's issues in policies, plans and programmes, including at the ministerial level, and had cooperated with non-governmental organizations in elaborating a national strategy for achieving equality, development, peace and prosperity. Thus, the Palestinian Authority adhered to the purposes and principles of all the relevant conventions and all the recommendations of major conferences when preparing legislation and programmes to assist women.

30. In spite of the serious deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, the Palestinians reaffirmed their commitment to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace for both parties — a peace that would also ensure the rights of women in Palestinian society.

31. **Ms. Suñé** (Andorra) said that her country had taken a number of important measures to implement the recommendations of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, such as the creation, in May 2001, of the Department of the Family within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; the submission of its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which had revealed shortcomings within the administration and other national bodies; and the signature of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the adoption of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 thereof.

32. The Department of the Family was collaborating, inter alia, with the Ministries of Justice and the Interior and with non-governmental organizations to implement the Protocol, which was aimed at combating violence against women, and an extensive survey on that issue was under way.

33. Furthermore, special attention was paid to the status of women in the workplace, which was favourable in the case of women heads of enterprises but unfavourable in the case of women employed in the service sector. That issue would benefit from consideration at the next International Conference on Financing for Development.

34. Events of major importance for women around the world included the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on the question of HIV/AIDS, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, and the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Madrid; they all involved issues close to the hearts of women.

35. With regard to the question of women and armed conflict, it was impossible to overemphasize the importance of women's participation in the various peace processes, as the Security Council had declared

in resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. In that regard, her delegation expressed its solidarity with the Afghan population, especially the women, and hoped that the action being taken by the United Nations would help to improve their lot and ensure their participation in the adoption of decisions concerning them.

36. **Mr. Agam** (Malaysia) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He stressed that the objectives of the major conferences held during the 1990s, including the Beijing Conference, had not yet been attained in many countries, including his own, because of several obstacles encountered by the developing countries, including lack of resources, the debt burden, the decline in international funding, and globalization. Those obstacles hampered national development and, considering that the 12 areas of concern to women defined at the Beijing Conference in fact related to development in general, slowed the advancement of women, who continued to be excluded from development right from childhood because of their subordinate status, gender-based prejudices, lack of access to education and, above all, poverty. Thanks to the foresight of its leaders since independence in placing education, health and the fight against poverty at the top of its development agenda, Malaysia had today emerged as a prosperous nation. Thus, its maternal-protection and health-care systems had been acknowledged as among the best in the world.

37. In the struggle to eradicate poverty, especially among women, greater recourse should be had, as the Secretary-General had proposed, to microcredit. Studies had shown that women had a loan-repayment rate of almost 100 per cent and, after the second or third loan, the majority of women borrowers were able to move their family members out of the grip of poverty, thereby proving their ability to borrow and reimburse and to influence the country's development. The Government also recommended the adoption of other economic measures and development strategies for poor women, including those which provided for equal access to economic resources, information and development opportunities, especially for rural women, who were participating more and more in economic life.

38. Malaysia agreed with the Secretary-General's view that information and communication technology could contribute significantly to the empowerment of women. It was therefore committed to developing a knowledge-based society in which every person, regardless of race, religion, gender or place of residence, had access to new information technology and in particular the Internet. In order to prevent women from becoming mere bystanders in that regard, it had developed a women's action plan in cooperation with the Global Knowledge Partnership.

39. With regard to the issue of violence against women, his country was ready to take all necessary measures, in cooperation with the international community, with a view to eliminating that phenomenon, which threatened not only migrant women but all women, for all women were potentially vulnerable to rape, trafficking and sex tourism. His Government had adopted the Domestic Violence Act in 1994 and was cooperating with non-governmental organizations to push for greater transparency of police procedures in that area and to make the various institutions aware of the problem. Generally speaking, it encouraged civil society to contribute to the advancement of women through gender-sensitizing programmes and the mainstreaming of Malaysian women in all sectors and at all levels of society.

40. Lastly, his Government had in the previous year established a Ministry of Women and Family Affairs to coordinate national programmes in that area; to ensure that women's concerns were taken into account in the policy-formulation process and that no measures discriminated against women; to strengthen the institution of the family, considered as the foundation of society, and to improve the socio-economic well-being of women through capacity-building, entrepreneurship programmes and the strengthening of family values in society.

41. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) associated himself with the statement made by the delegation of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that the Beijing Platform for Action was still valid and should be implemented rapidly at the national, regional and international levels, with clear linkages between those levels. In particular, he welcomed the contribution made to its implementation by the United Nations system, especially the Commission on the Status of Women, and other international organizations. The issue of equality between men and women was a human rights question and full respect for that

principle was one of the building blocks for the sustainable development of a just society.

42. In view of the contribution made by Eritrean women to the country's independence struggle and the role they continued to play in the various spheres of community and national life, Eritrea had adopted policies aimed at ensuring respect for their human rights and their participation at all levels of political and economic decision-making processes. Thus, provisions had been adopted establishing equality of rights between men and women with respect to the nationality of children and the minimum age for marriage. Furthermore, since the reform of the land tenure system, women — whether divorced, widowed, or unmarried — had the same access to land ownership as men. Other provisions had been adopted to improve the status of Eritrean women, concerning in particular the equal division of marital property in the event of divorce, equal opportunities for employment, equal pay for equal work and the right to two months' paid maternity leave.

43. The status of Eritrean women had improved since the Beijing Conference, particularly as a result of the Government's policy of reserving 30 per cent of parliamentary seats for women. Furthermore, more women currently held posts in both the public and the private sectors.

44. Eritrea was facing serious social and economic constraints which affected women in particular, including the displacement of the civilian population as a result of the border conflict with Ethiopia, the reintegration and demobilization of combatants, environmental degradation and inadequate physical and social infrastructures. However, women were the main beneficiaries of social services. The Government was currently concentrating its efforts on the economic recovery of the country, which should bring more normalcy to the life of women.

45. Lastly, the availability of gender-disaggregated data in all sectors and at all levels of government was essential for the sound planning of gender-specific programmes.

46. **Mr. Hidayat** (Indonesia) associated himself with the statement made by Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He welcomed the progress made by the international community towards achievement of its common goals promoting the advancement of women, and in particular the debate in the Economic and Social Council at its 2001 substantive session on the issue of access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, which were of particular importance to women because of globalization, of which they were often the first victims.

47. His country also welcomed the convening by the Division for the Advancement of Women of an expert group on the situation of rural women in the context of globalization, which had provided a basis for the activities planned by Indonesia as follow-up to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The expert group had rightly emphasized that rural women must have equal access to productive resources, such as land, capital, technology, employment, social services and decision-making, which were essential aspects of genuine equality and participation.

48. Indonesia also welcomed the progress being made in addressing the problem of violence against women migrant workers. The international community must continue to pay attention to their situation and to explore the link between immigration and trafficking in women.

49. In Indonesia, where social conditions and the situation of women had deteriorated as a result of the financial crisis, the Government had adopted five priorities for action especially in the economic area to provide assistance to women in such sectors as health and education; those priorities were reflected in the State budget for 2002. The Government was taking direct measures to ensure women's participation as agents of development, and had established information and communications technology centres which should benefit women throughout the country. Technical assistance from the United Nations was required, however, including assistance in the development of software for the empowerment of women in rural areas and in collecting best practices in the use of information and communications technology.

50. The Government was working with non-governmental organizations to combat trafficking in women through efforts to develop special institutions and mechanisms, the appointment of a national rapporteur, the strengthening of data collection and greater protection for victims. In addition, the State Minister for the Empowerment of Women was working continuously to raise awareness of the issue.

51. Moreover, the Government was working to implement a wide range of reforms to ensure a more

democratic society, inter alia by strengthening the legal system for the protection of women's rights and increasing the participation of women in political life. Indonesia welcomed the role of UNIFEM in that regard.

52. In conclusion, he underlined yet again the need for financial resources and various other forms of assistance for the developing countries, so that they themselves could implement the policies and programmes which were universally recognized as necessary for the common good.

53. **Ms. Gunnarsdóttir** (Iceland) said that her delegation had aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. Full gender equality did not exist in practice in any country. The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was first and foremost a question of political will and the setting of priorities. Governments could accomplish much by enacting legislation ensuring the rights of women in general and securing their freedom of movement and equality before the courts.

54. Iceland had already ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, and her delegation appealed to all States which had not yet done so to follow its example. It also urged States parties to withdraw any reservations they had made which were incompatible with the objectives and purpose of the Convention, and reiterated that it was the obligation of States parties to implement the provisions of the Convention at the national level.

55. In Iceland, the focus was on equal pay for equal work between men and women and the representation of women in high-level decision-making positions, including in politics. The equitable sharing of parental and family responsibilities was another topic of national debate, and a law had been enacted in 2000 granting parents equal rights to parental leave.

56. Iceland was also working to reduce violence in general and against women in particular. Non-governmental organizations had played a very important role and the Government had taken various measures, including the establishment of an around-the-clock rape trauma service at a hospital in Reykjavik offering medical, psychological and legal services to victims of sexual violence. That service had helped to increase understanding of the serious health consequences of sexual violence and had already been used successfully for education and preventive work in schools.

57. With regard to Afghanistan and the terrible plight of Afghan women, she said that, if the United Nations should become involved in peace-building and reconstruction, it was imperative that Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security should be implemented and that Afghan women should participate in the peace process. Iceland had been contributing for the past two years to the UNIFEM office in Kosovo, where women had been engaged in the political process, both as candidates and as voters. It was important that the United Nations should really be in a position to apply resolution 1325 (2000) in the field and verify how it was being implemented in practice.

58. In conclusion, she said that gender equality upheld the dignity of all human beings and contributed to the prosperity of society as a whole. Discrimination against women, far from affecting them alone, worked to the detriment of society as a whole.

59. **Ms. Rajaonarivelo** (Madagascar) supported the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She welcomed the entry into force in December 2000 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which allowed individuals or groups to submit communications directly to the Committee responsible for monitoring implementation of the Convention. Madagascar intended to ratify that Protocol in the near future and once again called on States which had entered reservations to the Convention to review their position. It also called on individuals and groups which defended the rights of women to ensure that the principle of equality was taken into account in national legislation.

60. Despite the progress made in promoting gender equality, which varied from country to country, much still remained to be done to strengthen the role of women, notably in development management, conflict prevention and peace-building.

61. The consequences of armed conflicts affected mostly women and children, millions of whom were in need of humanitarian assistance, and the number of women refugees continued to grow, especially in Africa. The General Assembly must, at its fifty-sixth session, endeavour to devise permanent and lasting

solutions applicable to all refugee women the world over, with respect for their cultural identity.

62. As to violence against women, she applauded the fact that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court covered crimes such as sexual slavery and enforced prostitution. Madagascar had been one of the first countries to sign that instrument, which it intended to ratify. She also welcomed the initiative taken by the European Union with regard to the preparation of domestic-violence indicators in 2002.

63. Mindful of the link between racial discrimination and discrimination against women, her country welcomed the consensus reached in the Declaration and Programme of Action that had emerged from the Durban Conference and would continue to contribute to the struggle against discrimination in all its forms. The Malagasy Constitution prohibited all discrimination based on sex, educational level, social origin, race, religious belief, opinion or wealth.

64. Madagascar's policy for the advancement of women assigned special importance to rural women, who were more numerous than their urban counterparts. In the economic field, that policy was aimed overall at increasing investment and employment opportunities for women in all sectors, if necessary with the participation of men. In the field of education, the aim was to improve school enrolment and attendance rates among girls, promote their integration into society and provide education that reflected concern with gender equality. With regard to health policy, women were encouraged from adolescence onwards to practise healthy hygiene and to avail themselves of family planning and reproductive health care, with the participation of men where appropriate. Lastly, actors in civil society and non-governmental organizations were urged to pay more attention in their activities to women and their needs.

65. In conclusion, her delegation hoped that sufficient resources would be allocated to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) to enable it to continue its activities and attain the objectives set forth in the Millennium Declaration.

66. **Ms. Moreno** (Paraguay) said that gender equality should be at the centre of activities undertaken to attain the objectives set forth in the Millennium Declaration, whether it was to combat poverty, improve the quality of life of women and men or ensure respect for and enjoyment of fundamental rights.

67. In recent the years, Paraguay had followed up on the commitments it had entered into at the Beijing Conference and later at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and it had made substantial progress in several areas.

68. In the legislative area, it had put in place a legal framework that would fully guarantee the rights of women, ensuring not only their protection, but also their advancement on a broad scale, so that they could participate in all activities of society on an equal footing with men. It had recently adopted a Code on Childhood and Adolescence and a law against domestic violence to protect women, and children of both sexes, against physical, psychological and sexual abuse within the family.

69. The Department for Women's Affairs, the body responsible for sexual equality at all levels in State policies had made the implementation of the national plan for the prevention and suppression of violence against women one of its priorities in its fight against that scourge, which claimed many victims. It had also created a national assistance centre that provided all sorts of services to victims of conjugal violence.

70. One objective of Paraguay's educational reform was to guarantee genuine equality and a total absence of discrimination between the sexes. Moreover, the Department for Women's Affairs was cooperating closely with the Ministry of Education in the implementation of a programme designed to promote the equality of women and girls in education; the initial results had been an increase in the enrolment of girls in primary, middle and high schools.

71. In the field of health, a national epidemiological and maternal health and mortality monitoring commission had been established to continue to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rates, especially in peri-urban and rural areas.

72. The proportion of elected posts occupied by women had improved since the establishment of electoral quotas, but still left something to be desired.

73. In the economic field, the latest data obtained from the household survey had shown the poverty index to be lower in Paraguay when women played an important role. In the light of the region's poor economic situation, the agricultural campaign launched

by the Government for the period 2001-2002 placed emphasis on the traditional role of peasant women with regard to food security.

74. At the regional level, the Paraguayan Government, through the Department for Women's Affairs, was actively participating in regional conferences held in Latin America and the Caribbean to ensure the implementation of international commitments within the region. Lastly, at the subregional level, Paraguay and the other countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) were endeavouring to ensure that the differences between the sexes were taken into consideration in the working groups of MERCOSUR on various questions.

75. **Mr. Al-Hazza** (Kuwait), speaking on agenda item 112, said that his delegation was carefully studying the reports of the Secretary-General on matters relating to women, and asked the international community to ensure that the important recommendations contained therein were implemented.

76. Regarding the advancement of women in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti Constitution, which forbade any type of discrimination based on sex, guaranteed women all political, economic and social rights; Kuwait had signed numerous instruments designed to protect and strengthen women's rights, thus recognizing the role that women could play in social development. The Government was in the process of finalizing a series of laws aimed at improving women's social situation and consolidating the results obtained in that field. There were already many Kuwaiti women in positions of responsibility, such as under-secretary of state, university rector or ambassador; moreover, women participated in many social and information activities within women's associations which received material support from the Government and they were entirely free to help build a modern society.

77. Hundreds of Kuwaiti women were experiencing grave psychological and social problems because their husbands, sons and/or relatives were still being held in Iraqi prisons after being taken prisoner during the occupation of Kuwait 11 years earlier. The situation was all the more painful for them in that they had no news of them, owing to Iraq's boycott of the Tripartite Commission responsible for examining the question of Kuwaiti and other prisoners and detainees and its silence on the fate of the 605 prisoners, seven of them young women. The issue of the Kuwaiti detainees was a humanitarian one which it was in no party's interest to politicize.

78. Despite the existence of a large number of international conventions devoted to women, women continued to be victims of discrimination and violence throughout the world, especially in war situations and situations of political conflict. Mention should be made in that regard of the suffering of the Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territories owing to the inhuman practices and policies of the Israeli occupation forces, and of the courage they displayed in the face of adversity.

79. **Mr. Ahsan** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation fully aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. While women's emancipation had been one of the major achievements of the twentieth century, the goal of equality, development and peace for all women, set at the Beijing Conference, was far from having being attained. With each new world conference on women new problems emerged, even as the preceding ones were being tackled, as had been shown during the five-year review of the follow-up to the Beijing Conference.

80. The eradication of poverty among women, which was both a cause and a consequence of their marginalization, was one of the areas that must remain a primary concern. Bangladesh had been providing microcredit to achieve that end and was currently endeavouring to extend its use to a number of areas (including housing, means of subsistence and social welfare), as part of a comprehensive anti-poverty initiative. That initiative could only yield results if the Government and civil society organizations joined forces and if the country's development partners, including the international financial institutions, came to its aid by, inter alia, developing an effective policy framework.

81. With regard to rural women, who were greatly affected by poverty, it was crucial, as the expert group meeting on the situation of rural women within the context of globalization had indicated, to help them to adapt to changes in the labour market and improve their means of subsistence, and to that end, do everything possible in the long term to improve their vocational skills. The recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/268) were interesting in that regard.

82. Violence against women, an evil from which no country was immune and which was therefore a joint responsibility, was another area that called for more intensive efforts. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should ensure that violations of the basic rights of women were forcefully addressed. Bangladesh had ratified the Convention and thus contributed to its entry into force.

83. His delegation shared the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on violence against women migrant workers (A/56/329) that such women frequently had limited access to legal remedies in cases of discrimination and exploitation. The United Nations must continue to study issues affecting migrant women in a systematic manner; it was often limited knowledge that prevented Governments from responding effectively.

84. Special attention should be accorded to the situation of women in situations of armed conflict, not only because their human rights were violated in numerous ways, but also because women often contributed effectively to establishing peace, as had been seen in Africa, the Balkans, Asia and Latin America. He was gratified that the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing+5 outcome document contained provisions designed to enhance the contribution of women to peacemaking and peace-building; however, much follow-up action was needed in that area. The United Nations should give priority to that issue.

85. **Mr. Paiva** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)), speaking on the issue of violence against women migrant workers under agenda item 112, said that growing numbers of women were not only migrating, but also migrating independently, which exposed them to considerable risks and presented enormous challenges to Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and society at large.

86. Research on the feminization of migration conducted since the Beijing Conference had increased awareness of three of the major issues concerning women migrant workers. The first concerned the effects of migration on their empowerment, which was often weakened as a consequence, not strengthened. His organization had contributed to the body of knowledge in that area through a joint study with the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) on women migrant workers from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. In accordance with one of the study's recommendations, IOM was currently helping potential women migrants to gain access to better information on their rights and obligations in host countries and on available avenues for recourse if they fell victim to discrimination or were exploited. It also played an active part, jointly with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Labour Organization and international non-governmental organizations in the work of the Steering Committee for the Global Campaign for Ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

87. The second major issue concerning women migrant workers was their growing tendency to resort to irregular migration, which increased their susceptibility to violence and exploitation by limiting their access to employment in the structured sector and thus also to social welfare. Their vulnerability was threefold: they were vulnerable as women, as foreigners and as persons without legal residence status. In order to resolve the problem of irregular migration in general and of women migrant workers in particular, IOM was of the view that it was necessary to go beyond traditional control measures and address the root causes of the problem. Considerable emphasis must be placed on prevention efforts, in particular through information campaigns concerning avenues for legal migration and the risks inherent in irregular migration, especially those arising from having recourse to smugglers.

88. The third major issue affecting women migrant workers was that they were increasingly falling victim to traffickers. Having closely studied the issue for several years, IOM had concluded that there was a need for a strategy dealing with both prevention and assistance. With regard to prevention, IOM sought to ensure that women were better alerted in their countries of origin to the ruses adopted by traffickers and to the difficulties they would face if they fell victim to such ruses. (IOM had already launched information programmes of that kind in Central and Eastern Europe.) It also organized information campaigns in host countries for those most likely to come into contact with women, who were the victims of trafficking, particularly women forced into prostitution.

The first information campaign of that kind, organized during the past year in the Balkans, had yielded positive results.

89. With regard to assistance, IOM was working to protect women who were the victims of trafficking by providing them with housing, arranging medical attention, organizing their return home and facilitating their social reintegration, in close collaboration with host Governments, consulates, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. It was particularly grateful to donor countries for their generous help in financing its activities.

90. The three issues he had mentioned could only be resolved through dialogue and cooperation between countries, which were all increasingly affected. The International Organization for Migration was heartened by the large number of Governments which had signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and that ratifications were proceeding rapidly. That could only help to regulate migration in the interests of both migrants and host countries.

91. **Mr. Millo** (Israel) said it was unacceptable that certain delegations diverted the Committee's attention from the agenda items under consideration in order to attack his country. Israel was not fighting against Palestinian women or against Palestinians in general. It was merely combating Palestinian violence and terrorism and exercising its legitimate right of self-defence.

92. The difficulties endured by the people of Palestine in recent years were the sole responsibility of the Palestinian Authority, which had rejected the very generous proposals made by Israel at Camp David and unleashed violence and terrorism against innocent Israeli civilians. That approach had not achieved anything, resulting only in a veritable bloodbath on both sides. There would be no solution if the Palestinians continued along that path.

93. That tragic situation should lead the Palestinians to the only valid logical and moral conclusion: that a solution would only be reached through negotiations; and the sooner the better.

94. **Mr. Ahmed** (Iraq) said that there were no Kuwaiti prisoners in Iraq, since all those detained after the 1991 ceasefire had been liberated. However, it was possible that there were Kuwaitis who had disappeared, just as there were Iraqis who had disappeared. Iraq continued to cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in order to shed some light on their whereabouts, in accordance with the pertinent international instruments. Also, it had always been ready to cooperate with any other competent party, whether ICRC, the Arab League, or Kuwait itself, without seeking to politicize the matter. There was no doubt that Kuwait was using the issue of those who had disappeared for a political end: to maintain the embargo against the Iraqi people, despite their suffering.

95. **Mr. Al-Hazza** (Kuwait), referring to the statement of the representative of Iraq according to which there were no Kuwaiti prisoners but only Kuwaitis who had disappeared, said that the resolutions of the Security Council did not mention disappeared persons, but only prisoners of war and that, as far as he was concerned, Iraq's cooperation, or rather the initiative it had proposed, was a way of not implementing those resolutions. Kuwait firmly rejected all Iraqi initiatives concerning the problem of prisoners that were not in compliance with the resolutions of the Security Council, even if those initiatives were submitted within the framework of the Arab League or any other pertinent entity.

96. **Ms. Barghouti** (Permanent Observer for Palestine) said that her delegation had not wished to exercise its right of reply, but the many misleading affirmations contained in the representative of Israel's statement, in particular, that the Palestinian Authority had caused the Camp David negotiations to fail and had resorted to violence and terrorism, forced her to speak.

97. The truth was that it was the Israeli occupying forces, with their racist and authoritarian practices, that were the cause of what was happening in the occupied territories. The Palestinian Authority had condemned violence in all its forms, particularly killing, many times. In response, the Israeli occupying forces had continued to commit assassinations, launch attacks and close off the occupied territories; all such practices had been condemned by the pertinent international instruments and by the international community, which considered that they were war crimes and a form of

State terrorism. As to the statement that Israel was a peaceful State, it was evident that it did not apply to the current Israeli Government, which, through its policies and the declarations of its official representatives, sought to sabotage every effort to achieve a ceasefire, prevent the implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell Report, and obstruct the peace process, while clearly trying to undermine the efforts to establish a broad coalition against international terrorism.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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01-59445 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/56/3, 38, 174, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/268, 279, 306, 316, 328, 329 and 472)

Agenda item 113: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/306, 319 and Add.1)

1. **Mr. Kumar Regmi** (Nepal), after associating himself with the statement by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, although women were the pivot of the family, the patriarchal societies in which most of them had been raised encouraged their subordination and discrimination against them in most fields. While the developed countries had made great headway towards equality and were being emulated by the developing countries, the situation was still unsatisfactory, especially for many women in rural areas.

2. Not only the international community, but also the national and international media, had an important role to play in ensuring adequate legal provisions for the promotion of women's rights, education, skills training, entrepreneurship activities and employment-generation, and in projecting a more favourable image of women. Equally crucial were the participation of women in politics and decision-making, awareness-raising and measures to eliminate trafficking in women and violence against them.

3. While a great deal had been achieved in regard to the commitments made at the 1995 Beijing Conference and reiterated at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the overall implementation of those commitments left much to be desired, and required concerted efforts. His delegation wholeheartedly supported the efforts of the United Nations system, as described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/219 and Add.1), and advocated that the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) should receive the resources and support needed for them to play a more active role in the promotion of women and their rights and in decision-making.

4. Despite many successful initiatives by the Government, the overall status of women in Nepal was still unsatisfactory, as it was in many developing countries, in terms of the gender gap in education, public services and policy-making. The authorities were enacting several laws and revising others to bring them into line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the basic guidelines of the Beijing Platform for Action had been incorporated into the country's development plan. Female-specific programmes in education, health and income-generation had achieved a measure of success. Political parties even allotted quotas for women to enable them to participate at all levels of politics, while all organizations were expected to try to prevent violence against women and ensure protection of their human rights.

5. **Mr. Tekin** (Turkey) said that the age-old legacy of Turkish women's emancipation had been a useful foundation on which to construct its goal of enhancing their rights and status and making gender equality a reality. Gender-equality activities conducted by governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations were coordinated by a special directorate in the Office of the Prime Minister which interacted with academic bodies and non-governmental organizations and had helped shape gender policy.

6. One result of inter-ministerial policy dialogue had been some decentralization whereby focal points established in provincial governors' offices provided services and disseminated information. The media were instrumental in increasing public interest in gender issues, as demonstrated by the many women's studies programmes and government-subsidized research centres in existence at universities throughout the country since the mid-1990s.

7. Given the Government's encouragement for the involvement of civil society in gender-mainstreaming policies, non-governmental organizations were represented on the four committees set up to deal with education, health, employment and law, in the wake of the Beijing Conference, to expedite implementation of its Platform for Action. Turkey had undertaken legal reforms in accordance with international conventions and the demands of women's movements. A party to the Convention since 1985, Turkey had withdrawn its

reservations in 1999 and had signed the Optional Protocol in 2000.

8. He reaffirmed his Government's commitment to pursue full gender equality and to cooperate with the United Nations to that end. In that connection, his country would shortly be hosting an expert meeting on the gender perspective of environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters, organized jointly by the Organization's Division for the Advancement of Women and its International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The findings would be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its next session. Turkish civil society had much to contribute to the meeting, in view of the terrible earthquakes Turkey had experienced in 1999.

9. **Mr. Bhattacharjee** (India) said that implementation of gender equality posed a major challenge, especially for developing countries. Having long recognized the need for targeted programmes for the advancement of women, India had reserved one third of the seats on elected village councils for women, while numerous social-service institutions and mechanisms targeted women and children, and laws against sexual harassment in the workplace had been enacted. India's initial report, considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2000, had attested to the seriousness India accorded to the implementation of the Beijing recommendations and to its own goals for the advancement of women.

10. Commenting on the reports before the Committee, he expressed his delegation's dismay at INSTRAW's precarious situation, and hoped that Member States would not let it founder. His delegation agreed, by and large, with the focus of the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/56/268). It considered, however, that the solutions advocated were only partial, having failed to address the macro-factors that caused or aggravated the problems faced by rural women, or the impact that the global dynamics of integration had on them. It was vital that Governments received resources for taking affirmative action to counter those problems.

11. Traditional practices that affected female health called not only for legislative measures, but fundamental social change. Since the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women had shown that poverty contributed to the persistence of such practices, poverty eradication needed to be urgently addressed. His delegation hoped that UNIFEM's new agenda of promoting women's leadership in governance, peace and security would not delay its work on the economic advancement of women, which was still a major challenge for most developing countries.

12. He hoped that the report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action requested in resolution 55/71 would be submitted to the forthcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women and to the next session of the General Assembly, inasmuch as the report before the Committee (A/56/319 and Add.1) simply outlined the activities of the United Nations system in mainstreaming gender into its activities.

13. **Mr. Ounseng Vixay** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) associated himself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

14. Despite some important landmarks and satisfactory results on the women's movement's road to development, equality and world peace, many challenges persisted. Notwithstanding progressive policies for women formulated by some Governments, including his own, women still lived in poor conditions. Those in rural areas, millions of whom still lived below the poverty line, also required basic services, political rights and decision-making power. Genuine sustainable rural development and poverty eradication were the only remedies, especially in developing countries.

15. Recognizing women as an integral part of national development, his Government had formulated policies that involved them as equal partners at all levels, upgrading their skills to improve their employment opportunities.

16. Accordingly, the Lao Women's Union had adopted a five-year plan, accompanied by a four-point strategy, to enable women to play their role in the country's economic, political and social life as productive contributors to, and beneficiaries of, national development.

17. **Ms. Samah** (Algeria) said that the international community had integrated the gender dimension into policies and programmes, campaigned against violence

against women, and raised awareness of the need to respect their fundamental rights. However, it needed to redouble its efforts to further minimize, if not eliminate, the adverse consequences of world events, which made them even more vulnerable. Their burden had increased through HIV/AIDS and other diseases, the globalization of armed conflicts, and the upsurge in the traffic in women. In the light of those evils, her country had signed the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols, and ratification was under consideration. Her delegation urged that the extremely nebulous concept of human security, which occasionally "reared its head" in the Committee's deliberations, should be banished from its ambit.

18. Algeria had fully participated in the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session, and reaffirmed its commitment to their objectives. It was engaged in the preparation of numerous programmes and policies on women's participation in all aspects of the country's life, as well as their education and maternal and child health.

19. Her country's authorities devoted a great deal of attention to rural women and girls and provided them with technical advice, material and financial resources and access to bank credit or agricultural loans. World Rural Women's Day, on 15 October, was used to impart information to women in rural areas for establishing their own businesses and gaining some economic independence.

20. In 2001 many Algerian women had been appointed to very senior positions, such as judges, ambassadors and academic deans. Trade unions had organized seminars to apprise women of their rights, determine the role of the law in solving working women's problems, and ensure equality in all areas, including labour legislation.

21. She exhorted the international community to engage in constructive dialogue and closer cooperation to meet the goals set at the twenty-third special session.

22. **Ms. Al Khalifa** (Bahrain) said that her delegation supported the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The advancement of women meant the advancement of society because of the vital role of women as teachers of each successive generation. Women's rights must be preserved and confirmed to bring about gender equality in terms of rights and obligations. During the current year an association of working women had been created. Bahraini women, however, had gone further, seeking to enter the election, to be held in the current month, of the governing board of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

23. Among the advances realized by women in recent years, mention should be made of the role played by women's associations in Bahrain, the first of which had been established as early as the 1950s. The associations had been active in eradicating illiteracy among women who had missed the opportunity for education, organizing evening classes for them with the Ministry of Education.

24. The Prime Minister of Bahrain, when speaking of the importance of Bahrain's acceding to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, had referred to the role and contribution of Bahraini women side by side and on an equal footing with men.

25. No mention of the advancement of women was complete, she said, without reference to the dire effects of Israeli occupation on Palestinian women, who lived under the stranglehold of an economic blockade and were subjected to beating and killing even in front of international television cameras. It was difficult to imagine how women could achieve any development under such harsh conditions. Her delegation hoped that humanitarian organizations for women and the international community would take a greater interest in their intolerable situation.

26. **Mrs. Thandar** (Myanmar) associated herself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She recalled that a favourite theme at the Beijing Conference had been "Think globally, act locally", which was equally relevant in 2001, as attested to in Myanmar's initial report, submitted to CEDAW in 2000.

27. In her country, women and men enjoyed equal rights, and boys were not favoured over girls, since there was no dowry system and no family names to be perpetuated. Women of Myanmar had long enjoyed the right to inherit and the right to half of all assets in the event of divorce.

28. A number of women-oriented non-governmental organizations had been formed in the country and a

national plan of action formulated to promote the advancement of women, especially those living in remote border areas. The Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association worked closely with other non-governmental organizations and with the United Nations system and conducted vocational training programmes, operated a credit scheme for women starting their own business, and ran many day-care centres and maternity homes.

29. A national task force had been formed to combat trafficking in women and children, and women under 25 were forbidden to cross borders unaccompanied by parents or guardians. She called on the international community to support her country in its endeavours to improve the lot of its women with the limited resources at its disposal.

30. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) said that, although women made a significant contribution to income-generating activities, there had been few changes in the division of domestic responsibilities. The difficulties women encountered when seeking or retaining employment often forced them to abandon their careers and return to their domestic tasks, although experience had shown that the participation of women in all spheres of working life was a guarantee of sustainable growth, social balance and a peaceful future.

31. Haitian women were very involved in production, particularly in the informal sector, and in agriculture, considered indispensable for Haiti's development. They made an important contribution to national savings, but had limited access to education, health care and leisure.

32. Certain deep-rooted social and cultural values, which it was difficult to combat, also stood in the way of achieving gender equality. The creation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs at the beginning of the 1990s had been a first step towards improving the State's response to the problems faced by women; however, the Civil Code needed to be revised to take into account the needs and values of women, particularly rural women.

33. In theory, the full participation of women in Haitian society had been recognized long before the Beijing Conference. However, since then, in accordance with the Convention, the Ministry of Women's Affairs had identified discriminatory articles in domestic legislation and had also taken measures to improve the treatment of women by law enforcement agencies.

34. In the economic sector, priority had been given to improving the socio-economic conditions of women in order to increase national productivity. With the assistance of the international community, micro-credits had been established, which should help to integrate women more fully into society.

35. In the field of education, the figures showed evident advances in school attendance by girls. Recent regional meetings had urged all Governments to integrate women into the ranks of decision makers, and the 1999 electoral law of Haiti had included quotas for women.

36. Gender equality was not an end in itself. It should be combined with an affirmation of the specific qualities of women. There was no place for the aggressiveness with which certain organizations advocated gender equality, because ensuring that women had the same rights as men did not equate masculinizing them.

37. **Ms. Šimonović** (Croatia) said that Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) recognized the need to integrate women more effectively into the international peace process worldwide; women should therefore also be fully integrated into the international fight against terrorism.

38. Gender equality had been accepted as a fundamental value and goal of the twenty-first century. It would require some time to attain it and her delegation turned to the United Nations for leadership in pursuing the goals established since the Beijing Conference. The outcome document of the International Conference on Human Rights and Democratization, held in Dubrovnik earlier in October 2001, identified United Nations human rights priorities and the importance of applying a gender perspective in all spheres.

39. Croatia was a party to the Convention and had ratified the Optional Protocol. It had also amended its Constitution to explicitly include gender equality as one of the highest constitutional values. In collaboration with the governmental and non-governmental sectors, the Commission for Gender Equality had prepared a new national policy for the promotion of equality for the period 2001-2005, based on the resolutions of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

40. After the parliamentary elections of January 2000, the proportion of women in Parliament had quadrupled, to nearly 25 per cent. A new parliamentary committee for gender equality had been established in January 2001. Women now comprised the majority of employees in executive bodies, the judiciary and local self-government bodies, although there were still insufficient women occupying senior political positions. Women represented nearly half of the workforce, but a little over half in the informal sector. Consequently, the economic empowerment of women was one of the most important challenges facing the country.

41. Civil society played a very important role in Croatia, particularly non-governmental organizations that worked in the area of women's rights and in raising awareness on different forms of discrimination against women. The Government supported their efforts by financing some projects.

42. **Mr. Mun** Jong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that all countries should pursue policies to protect the rights and interests of women and encourage women to participate fully in social, economic and political life. Women should be encouraged to participate in international forums, including the United Nations, so as to contribute to peace and development.

43. Discrimination and violence against women could not be justified in any circumstances. The root cause of violence against women today lay in the impunity of past crimes against women, and his delegation again pointed out that Japan had still failed to acknowledge its past crimes against humanity. During its colonial rule of Korea, Japan had forced over 200,000 Korean women to act as "comfort women" for the Japanese Army. After that had been denounced before international forums, including the United Nations, Japan had merely responded by establishing the "Asian Women's Fund" in order to appease the international community, although a sincere apology and full compensation for the victims had been demanded. The issue had now been eliminated from the country's official history. Japan had also refused entry to his country's delegation invited to take part in meetings on the "comfort women" issue organized by the non-governmental sector. Japan was strongly urged to accept its full responsibility for its past crimes by making a formal apology and providing compensation to the victims.

44. Lastly, he noted that the feminization of poverty increased the potential for women to become the victims of exploitation, trafficking and prostitution. Action should be taken to eradicate poverty and provide the material conditions to ensure the advancement of women with full enjoyment of their rights.

45. **Ms. Cain Marcus** (United States of America) said that culture could not be used to justify the denial of a woman's human rights. Among the most egregious violations were the atrocities committed by the Taliban against women in Afghanistan. Women who violated the Taliban decrees were beaten, imprisoned or even killed. A society that denied them education, health care, freedom of movement and employment would also deny others their human rights. Over recent years, there had been a growing worldwide awareness that women were so integral to a society's well-being that Governments and institutions could not thrive if they ignored women's rights or excluded them from political and economic participation.

46. It was estimated that more than 700,000 persons, particularly women and children, were trafficked each year. That was a modern form of slavery, yet only recently had Governments begun to address the problem systematically. Strong individual and collective action was needed to address all aspects of trafficking, and her Government was now implementing a new law to that effect. It had signed the two protocols on trafficking in persons, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It had also ratified ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour, and welcomed new partnerships in combating trafficking.

47. In January 2000, the Security Council had recognized that the HIV/AIDS pandemic — to which women and girls were especially vulnerable — was a major threat to development and security, while the Commission on the Status of Women had emphasized that the full enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights was of crucial importance in preventing the further spread of the disease. The United States was currently the world's largest bilateral donor of HIV/AIDS-related assistance; it had just announced a founding donation of $200 million to the global fund for the fight against HIV/AIDS and was proud to be participating in the international working group that was establishing the parameters of the fund.

48. Her delegation welcomed the Economic and Social Council's recent declaration, which recognized that the full participation of women in political, economic and social life was crucial to sustainable development. Women had an important leadership role to play in preventing conflict, encouraging reconciliation and helping rebuild conflict-ridden societies. They were an under-utilized force for peace and their presence in peace-building efforts should be actively promoted.

49. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. While 2000 had been of considerable significance for the advancement of women, efforts should continue, because, although globalization had ushered in unprecedented opportunities, it had adversely affected the least fortunate, and made women more vulnerable to exploitation. In that respect, poverty eradication was an essential step towards a world free of exploitation.

50. Pakistan remained committed to the ideals of gender equality and the empowerment of women embodied in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as demonstrated by the establishment of the National Commission on the Status of Women in July 2000, pursuant to its national plan of action. The Commission had constituted committees on education, health, the judicial system and violence against women, which would submit recommendations for action.

51. The Government was endeavouring to achieve gender equality in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and the resolutions of the twenty-third special session. The national plan of action for women addressed 12 critical areas and its implementation was currently being assessed. Since the Beijing Conference, Pakistan had made significant progress in various areas, including prison conditions, provision of credit and local government, where one third of seats were reserved for women.

52. At the regional level, Pakistan had taken part in the meeting of the regional steering committee for the advancement of women held in Kuala Lumpur in September 2000. One of its recommendations was to promote opportunities for dialogue between rural women from the different countries of the region.

53. **Ms. Mahouve Same** (Cameroon) said that solutions to global problems — whether of a social, political, economic or environmental nature — must take full account of women's needs. The world's women continued to face violence, discrimination and injustice on a daily basis. The impact on their physical and mental well-being restricted their choices in society still further, preventing their full and equal participation. Although progress had been made at a normative level, including revision of discriminatory law, practice lagged far behind. Women's economic capacities were limited, as was their ability to provide for their families and to care for their children.

54. Although recent decades had seen an increase in women's participation in decision-making at all levels, most major decisions affecting the future of the planet were taken by men. Women's economic and other rights continued to be trampled — a factor which exacerbated the feminization of poverty, particularly in developing countries.

55. Convinced that equity and people-centred development were crucial to national prosperity, her delegation welcomed the fact that important concerns previously relegated to the domain of "women's issues" were now centre-stage in the development debate. It was globally recognized now that development was unachievable without an improvement in the status of women.

56. In the context of national efforts for the advancement of women, her delegation was particularly appreciative of the support provided by the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Despite economic difficulties, her Government had succeeded in creating a favourable environment for the promotion of women's rights, as evidenced by revision of family law, slightly increased schooling of girls, improved school textbooks, greater access to reproductive health and family-planning services and enhanced involvement of women in politics. (Women currently occupied nearly one quarter of senior Party posts and 10 per cent of posts in Parliament.)

57. Rural women — who produced 90 per cent of the country's foodstuffs — received special treatment under national development policy, which included measures for agricultural productivity, crop storage, water provision and training for agricultural workers. Relaxation of the law of association had paved the way

for the formation of several rural women's associations.

58. The Government was currently implementing a five-year national women and development plan, designed to improve the living conditions and legal status of women, enhance female human resources in all sectors of development, promote the participation of women in decision-making, protect the girl child, combat violence against women and improve women's nutrition.

59. **Ms. Cedoño Reyes** (Venezuela) said that democracy should be founded on the right to equality, and that each country should create conditions guaranteeing equality between men and women in the exercise of power. In the 1999 Constitution of Venezuela gender equality had been included among the principles on which the rights and duties of citizens were based. In Venezuela, the National Plan for Women 1998-2003 had been drawn up in accordance with and with the commitments in the Beijing Platform for Action. The National Women's Institute, as the mechanism for the advancement of women, was promoting the gender perspective through initiatives in micro-credit, job creation and vocational training for women.

60. The impact of HIV/AIDS had been disproportionately severe on women; it was therefore essential to incorporate a gender perspective in programmes to control the disease by empowering women to make decisions regarding their own sexuality and reproductive health. Her delegation had been pleased to note that the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly had taken into account the gender-related realities of the pandemic and had taken a proactive approach. The National Women's Institute was also working to increase women's representation in politics and government, and had begun to make some progress in that area. Rural women had been at an even greater disadvantage since the economic crises of the 1980s, and the Institute had responded by naming a commissioner for rural women's rights and had allocated 30 per cent of its micro-credit funds to them.

61. The Government had implemented a series of policies and laws to combat violence against women and, together with the National Women's Institute, had drawn up a national plan of action to prevent and punish family violence. Awareness had been raised and recognition gained that family violence was a complex public health problem which should be addressed both by the State and by civil society.

62. Venezuela, which had been a party to the Convention since 1982, had signed the Optional Protocol in 2000 and was in the process of ratifying it, thereby demonstrating its unwavering commitment to the advancement of women at all levels.

63. **Ms. Uluiviti** (Fiji) said that "gender equalization" necessitated far-reaching structural and attitudinal shifts. The new Government in Fiji had reconstituted the Ministry for Women's Affairs alongside the Ministries of Social Welfare and of Poverty Alleviation to reflect the direct correlation between poverty and gender inequality. (Previously, the Ministry had been joined with the Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare.) Gender mainstreaming was being introduced in all policy sectors in furtherance of the Beijing goals.

64. Working women in Fiji were largely concentrated in low-skilled, gender-stereotyped occupations. The country thus had yet to reflect the positive trends highlighted in the Secretary-General's report. Women workers were still often exposed to unhealthy or hostile working conditions, which affected productivity. With half the country's human resources thus underutilized, Fiji continued to forego the benefits of an equitable labour market. The new phenomenon of women migrant workers had further highlighted vulnerabilities in the system: as a receiving country, Fiji had been ill-prepared to meet their specific needs. It had also proved difficult to compile relevant data on such women because of their reluctance to divulge personal information; assistance being provided by UNIFEM in that regard was thus particularly welcome.

65. Current labour reforms in Fiji were geared towards improving working conditions and achieving equal opportunities for women and men. The Government was also exploring ways of encouraging women to enter traditionally male professions. Thanks, in part, to new government machinery for promoting gender equality, some progress had been achieved. However, marginalization and victimization persisted owing to entrenched structural and attitudinal barriers.

66. Fiji women had also been greatly affected by the recent political crisis in the country, and had borne the brunt of the redundancies in unskilled, non-unionized sectors. Fiji women had, however, been instrumental in maintaining peaceful vigils and conducting non-violent

and conciliatory initiatives. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the recommendations contained in the Brahimi report (A/55/305-S/2000/809) and looked forward to their implementation.

67. Her delegation supported the extra meetings proposed for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but would be keen to see it address its organization of work at pre-sessional meetings. The Commission on the Status of Women should also review its working methods; however, its efforts to integrate the objectives of all the major world conferences into its multi-year work programme were most welcome.

68. Her delegation welcomed gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations, but regretted the recent decrease in the number of female staff appointed in the Secretariat. It was to be hoped that more women would be recruited for senior and professional posts in the near future.

69. Her delegation was also concerned at the precarious situation of INSTRAW which catered for the needs of developing countries.

70. **Mrs. Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) said that the international community must forge real partnerships to achieve decent life chances and the realization of human rights for all, including the right to development. Some 70 per cent of Suriname's population continued to live below the poverty line. Thanks to international and bilateral aid, the country had, however, made great strides on gender equality, with some women now occupying senior government posts. A National Centre for Gender Policy had been created to coordinate the activities of women's organizations in such fields as health, education, employment and housing.

71. Her country could now boast a gender-mainstreaming training programme for civil servants, developed in collaboration with UNIFEM; a nationwide network to combat violence against women, which also provided shelters; and regional workshops on women in leadership, education and the media.

72. Older women were particularly vulnerable to poverty and deserved special attention, especially in developing countries. In order to ensure that such women were not subjected to discrimination, her Government was currently executing a budget analysis (with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)). A computer training centre had also been established to benefit older women.

73. **Ms. Jarbussynova** (Kazakhstan) said that her Government had always accorded special attention to the advancement of women. Mechanisms were being developed to increase women's integration into social and political life over the long term, and to enhance their participation in decision-making. The National Commission on Family and Women's Affairs had approved a national plan of action elaborated with the assistance of non-governmental organizations.

74. Female health was a matter of serious concern, with women registering very low on the national health index. Two thirds of them were anaemic. The incidence of breast cancer — attributed to the Semipalatinsk nuclear tests and Aral Sea ecological catastrophe — was on the increase. Regrettably, the Government was hampered in its efforts to improve the health situation by difficulties associated with transition to a market economy. It thus welcomed United Nations assistance and looked forward to a broadening of cooperation.

75. Her delegation fully supported the efforts of the United Nations system to improve the status of the world's women. In particular, it wished to stress the important promotion of gender mainstreaming by the Economic and Social Council and the role of UNIFEM.

76. In the light of action currently being carried out in Afghanistan by the global coalition against terrorism, it was particularly vital that the international community should pay attention to the situation in that long-suffering country, where women's rights were constantly violated. The United Nations should elaborate a comprehensive programme to protect such women and their children and to assist them in establishing a new, worthy life in the context of national reconstruction.

77. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her delegation supported the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She reaffirmed her country's commitment to the conventions and other instruments on the advancement of women, especially the Beijing Platform for Action and the resolutions of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, which promoted women's issues and gender equality in government policy, public opinion, the media and academic institutions. The national strategy for Syrian women to the year 2005 was being

implemented within the framework of the national economic and social development plans.

78. The advancement of women ranked high in her country. The Constitution emphasized the principle of equal rights and obligations and equal opportunities for men and women in all areas of life, even according women certain additional rights. National programmes and plans were founded on those principles. The achievements realized thus far in women's participation in social, economic and political life in the Syrian Arab Republic were obvious. Women participated effectively in Parliament and government. Under the country's labour legislation, women had equal opportunities with men, receiving the same pay as men for the same work. Health-care services for women had improved greatly throughout the country, in both rural and urban areas. Education was free for all, and female illiteracy had decreased. There were also numerous laws severely punishing any crime or practice affecting women's rights or health.

79. Her country had hoped that the international community would take action to implement all aspects of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session resolutely and without double standards. Women's rights must be realized for all women, not just for some. Any talk of equality, freedom and empowerment of women and affirmation of their rights was utopian and ignored international humanitarian law and human rights unless the question of the status of women under foreign occupation was taken up by all. Foreign occupation that violated fundamental rights ran counter to all international covenants and legislation and the relevant Security Council resolutions, which recognized unequivocally the fundamental rights of every human being, whether man, woman or child.

80. Under the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and Palestinian and Lebanese territory, Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese Arab women remained deprived of all those rights. They lacked health care, protection, education, work and other human rights owing to the ugliest kind of discrimination, based fundamentally on the occupation of the land and the application of a policy of repression, colonization and economic blockade by the Israeli occupation forces. Women's organizations in the Syrian Arab Republic, in cooperation with the relevant international organizations and human rights networks, were monitoring the situation of Syrian women in the occupied Syrian Golan to ensure the full exercise of their rights, involving in particular the end of the occupation and the achievement of peace. Inasmuch as those two requirements had not yet been met, any talk of the need for advancement and empowerment of women was far-fetched.

81. **Mr. Shihab** (Maldives) said that the progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was encouraging, but that the challenges remaining did not allow for complacency. His Government, in collaboration with civil society, was making efforts to change deep-seated attitudes and practices that perpetuated gender inequality. Constitutional and legislative measures guaranteeing women's rights had been strengthened, and structures were being put into place for the establishment of a gender-management system, in line with the Commonwealth approach to gender mainstreaming.

82. In order to ensure women's access to resources, micro-financing programmes exclusively for women had been launched. Women were being encouraged to enter non-traditional fields, while men were being encouraged to take greater responsibility in family life. The Government had paid particular attention to women's political awareness and legal literacy, and had succeeded in increasing the percentage of women in Parliament from 6 per cent to 10 per cent in the current term.

83. Maldives was making headway in improving the status of women, although the pace had been slower than desired. As a small island developing State, its capacity was restricted by financial and human limitations. He therefore called on the United Nations system and the donor community to support such countries in the pursuit of their goal of integrating women into the mainstream of society.

84. **Ms. Kusorgbor** (Ghana) said that, in Ghana, women's dominance in primary sectors of the economy had been recognized. Gender concerns had therefore been gradually but systematically mainstreamed into national policies and programmes. As a firm commitment to the cause of women and children, the Government had elevated the national machinery on women to a full-fledged Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs headed by a Cabinet minister. Further, aware of the role of formal education in the empowerment of women, it had appointed a minister with responsibility for primary and secondary

education as well as the education of the girl child, specifically to facilitate equal access to basic education for boys and girls and to promote the retention of girls in school.

85. The challenges posed by poverty were deep, and impeded national efforts to achieve the objectives outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action. The debilitating effects of poverty weakened women's resolve particularly in the exercise of their rights and independence. To address the root causes of those problems, the Government was reviewing policies on micro-financing for investment and other economic empowerment initiatives. The new Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs had begun efforts to address the needs of rural women in the long term, and in the short term was offering opportunities for non-formal education and vocational training.

86. Her delegation welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and armed conflict. Women and children were the primary victims of wars and civil unrest, and their participation in the solution was critical. It looked forward to the high-level "brainstorming" session to be held in December to elaborate a strategy for implementation of the resolution.

87. Although the challenges of globalization and HIV/AIDS had undermined efforts to give women the status they rightfully deserved, the international community must remain engaged and determined to improve their lot.

88. **Ms. King** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), summarizing the debate, said that the many speakers had shared important information on "building blocks" for the advancement of women at the national level and had strongly endorsed the priorities set by the Commission on the Status of Women. Among those priorities, they had highlighted poverty reduction and globalization, debt, official development assistance and structural adjustment from a gender perspective. Violence against women and women in conflict situations was another subject of great interest. The plight of Afghan women had been mentioned frequently, and there was consensus that they must be integrated at an early stage into any peace process. In connection with the problems of trafficking in women, adoption of the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its relevant protocols was viewed as esssential.

89. Among the positive aspects of globalization, efforts to reduce the digital gender gap had been mentioned. Widespread support had been expressed for women's human rights and the work of CEDAW and the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Broad support had also been expressed for an additional session of the Committee to help in clearing its reporting backlog.

90. Progress had been noted in incorporating a gender perspective in the economic sector, reconstruction efforts, micro-credit programmes and the development of indicators. The staff of the Division for the Advancement of Women had heard the imperative to integrate a gender perspective into all future global conferences, such as the forthcoming Second World Assembly on Ageing. The concerns regarding the future of INSTRAW and the need to achieve gender balance in the Secretariat had also been registered. She appreciated the support expressed for the efforts of the Division, while acknowledging that much remained to be done to achieve its goals.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

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Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children

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01-59452 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/56/203, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/342-S/2001/852, A/56/453, A/56/488)

1. **Ms. Hammam** (Director of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) read out the statement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

2. The annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on the protection of children affected by armed conflict (A/56/453) and the second report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/56/342-S/2001/852), submitted simultaneously to the Security Council and General Assembly in 2001, were complementary and should be considered together during the deliberations on that item.

3. In his report to the General Assembly the previous year, the Special Representative had indicated that his agenda for the second three-year mandate of his Office would focus on building a global social and political movement of awareness, pressure and protection for children affected by armed conflict and on consolidating the gains made during the first mandate. That vision had been translated into a work plan for the period 2001-2003.

4. In order to implement initiatives in the most effective manner, it was vital for the Office to have adequate resources and staffing. Additional staff was essential; accordingly, several new posts had just been filled and others would be filled soon.

5. Since the beginning of the Special Representative's mandate, his Office had identified the need both to fill critical knowledge gaps concerning the nature and scope of the impact of armed conflict on children and for better coordination and dissemination of available knowledge on the issue. It was determined that knowledge gaps needed to be filled in four areas: current trends in warfare affecting children; reliable data on children affected by armed conflict; relevant cultural norms and values for the protection of children and women during armed conflicts; and impact assessment of programmes and lessons learned. With the sponsorship of the Government of Italy, his Office, in collaboration with the Social Science Research Council, had convened a workshop in Florence in July 2001. The workshop, which had been attended by representatives of Governments and United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, foundations, research institutes and universities throughout the world, had accomplished its principal aims of developing an agenda and plan of action for research on the impact of armed conflict on children; mobilizing a research network that would deepen the connections across different institutions and constituencies; and ensuring that research outcomes and products were responsive to practical needs and could help to inform and strengthen policy-making and action.

6. His Office had proposed the formation of two informal inter-agency working groups intended to serve the cause of child protection within the United Nations system. The aim of the first one, which convened jointly by his Office and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Political Affairs, was to strengthen ongoing initiatives to incorporate child protection into the peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building processes. The aim of the other one, established together with DPKO, UNICEF and the Swedish non-governmental organization Rädda Barnen, was to produce a complete training package on the rights and protection of children for all multidimensional United Nations peace operations.

7. The Office and UNICEF had undertaken a review of the Child Protection Adviser experience in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The results of that review would serve as input for the informal inter-agency working group on the incorporation of child protection into the peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building processes; those results were already beginning to influence how his Office and UNICEF proposed candidates for recruitment as Child Protection Advisers.

8. As a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1341 (2001), he had visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 24 May to 3 June 2001 to assess first-hand the situation of children resulting from the ongoing conflict in that country. At the conclusion of his visit, during which he had met, inter alia, with war-affected children, political and military authorities, local non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, the Special Representative had called

for a plan of action to end the recruitment of child soldiers, which had been accepted by the parties to the conflict. He had recommended placing child protection and rehabilitation on the peace agenda; expanding the presence of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and its humanitarian activities; providing adequate and sustained resources for child protection; improving the monitoring of commitments made by parties to the conflict; fostering a subregional approach to child protection; improving data collection and research; focusing attention on the special needs of girls; building local capacity for child protection and advocacy; reinforcing traditional values that protected children; and taking measures to end the plunder of natural resources.

9. Throughout the year the Office had worked closely with Member States, the Preparatory Committee, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations to draw up the agenda on children and armed conflict to be submitted to the General Assembly special session on children. It had also contributed substantially to the report of the Secretary-General entitled, "We the Children: End-decade review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children", which, together with the agenda for action to protect war-affected children, had served as a basis for consultations among delegations working to conclude the outcome document.

10. The Office had made a number of proposals and convened discussion groups concerning the establishment and functioning of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, specifically relating to the involvement of children in the Court's proceedings as victims, witnesses or perpetrators of grave abuses during the war in that country. After much debate about whether and to what extent children might be held accountable, the principles of juvenile justice, with stipulated safeguards, had been incorporated into the Statute of the Special Court. The Office had also hosted two meetings with key actors to discuss how the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission might operate to protect the interests of children in a complementary and mutually supportive manner, consistent with their distinct but related functions.

11. The Security Council had shown its concern for the plight of children affected by armed conflict through seven resolutions, several statements by its President, as well as open debates. Several regional organizations and key country groupings, in particular the European Union, the European Commission, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the G-8, had continued to promote the children and armed conflict agenda. It was however regrettable that the document on the protection of the rights of children, particularly of children affected by armed conflict submitted to the OSCE Ministerial Council in November 2000 in Vienna had not been adopted. The Office would continue to work with concerned partners with a view to overcoming the current difficulties in approving that document.

12. The Office and UNICEF had embarked on a campaign intended to help bring the Optional Protocol into force with the requisite 10 ratifications as rapidly as possible; to date there were 83 signatories and 6 ratifications. Efforts also continued to reach out to civil society, religious communities, women's and non-governmental organizations and opinion makers at the local, national and international levels. Many of the activities undertaken had been aimed at encouraging young people and youth organizations to participate in events co-hosted with UNICEF and non-governmental organizations during the meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the special session on children and the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In addition, the Voice of Children initiative had been further developed in Sierra Leone, and that programme would also be launched in other countries.

13. UNICEF and the Office had undertaken a number of joint initiatives, including an appeal to Heads of State and Government urging signature and ratification of the Optional Protocol, follow-up activities on the commitments made by parties to armed conflict and the planning of measures for collaboration on the implementation of the Cotonou African, Caribbean and Pacific States-European Union Partnership Agreement; UNICEF was also a key partner in discussions about and development of the research agenda and network proposed by the Office.

14. In the future, efforts to meet the challenges posed by the many conflicts around the world must be reinforced. The tragic events of 11 September had once again underscored the complexity of those conflicts, their destabilizing regional and worldwide

repercussions and the devastating physical and psychological effects which they had on children and adolescents. The international community must redouble its efforts to protect children and adolescents during all phases of conflict. In particular, better ways must be found to prevent the perversion of traditional or religious norms and values and the recruitment of children for use in conflict and to promote their rehabilitation and reintegration into peaceful societies. The adoption of the Optional Protocol was an important first step to that end, and States which had not yet done so should ratify it before the special session on children in order to ensure that the conditions for its entry into force were met. However, ratification was not enough; experience had shown that, despite efforts by some parties to armed conflict to adhere to commitments and international legal obligations, children continued to be targeted in many ongoing conflicts. There was thus an urgent need to further expand and strengthen mechanisms to impartially and credibly report on compliance by parties to armed conflict with all international norms, standards and commitments protecting children and adolescents. Such reporting was necessary to exert political pressure on parties that did not comply.

15. Short and long-term initiatives to protect children and adolescents were also needed, including demobilization of child soldiers and their rehabilitation and reintegration during and after conflict. Member States and all relevant actors must provide adequate and sustained resources for programmes in that area so that children and adolescents could channel their energies towards the promotion of reconciliation and sustainable peace in war-torn societies. The Office would continue to act as advocate, catalyst and facilitator for the important work of supporting the agenda on children and armed conflict at the political, policy and programme levels.

16. **Mr. Roberfroid** (Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund), speaking on behalf of the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said that, although the special session on children had had to be postponed owing to the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the tireless efforts of Governments and groups of non-governmental organizations to prepare for that session must not be in vain. In fact, the new circumstances emphasized the urgency of building a better and more humane world.

17. More than 80 per cent of the text of the document on "A world fit for children" had been agreed, and agreement on the remaining issues was within reach. The views expressed by Governments during the preparatory process had served as a basis for the Fund's Medium-Term Strategic Plan for the period 2002-2005, which would be presented to the Executive Board in December 2001. The Plan reinforced results-based management and a human rights-based approach to programming. It reiterated the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in all the Fund's work and established five organizational priorities: girls' education, integrated early childhood development, new and improved immunization, fighting HIV/AIDS, and improved protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination.

18. The human rights approach was essential to the work of UNICEF. The Fund's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child meant that children were entitled to rights as human beings as well as to the right to special protection as children. The Fund and its partners sought to make all their programming efforts reflect the Convention in order to translate it from a piece of paper into an instrument which really improved children's lives.

19. The Committee on the Rights of the Child continued to play a crucial role in promoting changes in law, policy and practice in order to protect the rights of children. However, because of the Convention's success, the Committee had an ever-increasing workload and needed more expert members. For that reason, UNICEF called once again on States to accept the proposed amendment to article 43 of the Convention, which would raise the number of Committee members from 10 to 18. To date, 105 States had accepted that amendment and 21 more acceptances were needed; he hoped that would be achieved by the end of the year.

20. The Fund strongly supported the adoption of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He was pleased to announce that the tenth ratification of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been submitted very recently by Romania. The Protocol would therefore enter into force early in 2002, signalling the commitment of the international community to fight repeated violations of children's rights. The Optional Protocol on the involvement of

children in armed conflict so far had 85 signatures and six ratifications, while a number of ratification processes were under way. Once again UNICEF called upon all States to ratify both Optional Protocols and to make a binding declaration setting 18 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into armed forces, thereby confirming their commitment to put an end to the victimization of children.

21. The Fund was working closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the daily work of advocating the protection of children in conflict situations, in the preparation of the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council and the General Assembly on children in armed conflict, and on many other initiatives. It was present on the ground before, during and after conflicts to assist and protect children trapped in the chaos of war. Currently, in Afghanistan, UNICEF was engaged in a major effort to provide critical life-saving services such as food, water, sanitation, health care, warm clothes and basic education. It was sending humanitarian aid into Afghanistan using aircraft, trucks and donkeys for distribution by its national staff and non-governmental organizations which were its partners on the ground.

22. Over the past 12 months, UNICEF and its partners had made significant progress in advocating the release of child combatants and setting up programmes to demobilize and reintegrate them. In February 2001, 3,500 children had been released by armed groups in the Sudan and their reunification with their families had recently been completed. In Sierra Leone, UNICEF supported programmes for care and psychosocial support to children, and promoted the demobilization of child soldiers. Its activities had benefited more than 5,000 children associated with the fighting forces and an additional 5,000 abductees and other vulnerable children. A focus on girls was needed to address their special needs in the demobilization process.

23. The Fund had also begun to work with Governments and civil society in a number of countries to raise awareness of the humanitarian impact of small arms and light weapons, particularly on children. In its activities relating to children affected by armed conflict, the Fund continued to be guided by the report of Graça Machel and he was pleased to announce that her report on the progress made since her 1996 report would be launched in November 2001.

24. Children were the first victims of poverty but, if the international community invested in their future, they also held the key to its eradication. During the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, UNICEF had urged Governments to devote more resources to basic social services for children, such as health and education. Poverty would not be eradicated unless adequate resources were made available to build sustainable social programmes. At the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, UNICEF, in close partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, had focused on education as a key preventive strategy in combating racism, stigmatization and marginalization. The Fund continued to advocate improved access to quality education, especially for girls.

25. The special session on HIV/AIDS had provided an opportunity to focus on the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on children, with nearly half of all new infections occurring in youth under the age of 18 and some 10 million young people currently living with HIV in the developing countries. UNICEF was working tirelessly with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO) and others to improve community support and make prevention the highest priority of the global response, with particular emphasis on the role of young people themselves.

26. Together with the Government of Japan and non-governmental organizations which were its partners, UNICEF was preparing for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be held at Yokohama, Japan, in December 2001. That should be a landmark meeting which would focus increased international attention on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and lead to enhanced political commitment against that appalling abuse of the rights of the child. In the months ahead, the international community must renew its commitment to achieving a child-friendly world. The Global Movement for Children would continue to be a driving force, calling on everyone, everywhere, to work for the benefit of children. He called on everyone to work together to ensure that the postponement of the special session on children would simply guarantee that it would be even better.

27. **Mr. Ndiaye** (Director of the New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that, since the previous session of the General Assembly, both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Committee on the Rights of the Child had devoted great attention to preparing for their participation in the special session of the General Assembly on children. However, owing to the tragic events of 11 September in the United States of America, the special session had been postponed indefinitely.

28. As of 17 October 2001, 191 countries had acceded to or ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On 25 May 2000, the General Assembly had adopted two new Optional Protocols to the Convention, which had been opened for signature on 5 June 2000. As of 17 October 2001, 85 States had signed, and 6 had ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict; 10 ratifications were necessary for that instrument to enter into force. The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been signed by 78 countries and had been ratified by a tenth country that week; it would therefore enter into force in January 2002.

29. With regard to the amendment to article 43 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly in 1995, which would increase the number of members of the Committee from 10 to 18, he said that, as of 17 October 2001, 105 States parties had provided notification that they accepted that amendment, which, in order to enter into force, must be accepted by two thirds, or 127, of the States Parties to the Convention.

30. The Committee on the Rights of the Child would submit to the General Assembly at its session in 2002 its biennial report covering the six sessions held between January 2000 and January 2002. In 2001 the Committee had considered 27 reports of States parties: 21 initial reports and 6 second periodic reports. At its recently concluded twenty-eighth session the Committee had organized a one-day debate on violence against children in the family and in schools, following the previous year's debate on State violence against children. As follow-up to both discussions, and in accordance with the provisions of article 45 (c) of the Convention, the Committee had recommended, inter alia, the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to undertake on its behalf an in-depth international study on the issue of violence against children. Furthermore, in January 2001 the Committee had adopted its first general comment which had constituted its main contribution to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and had also focused on the objectives in the area of education set out in article 29 (1) of the Convention.

31. During its autumn 2000 session, the Committee had adopted guidelines on the submission of reports of States parties relating to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It would in the near future adopt guidelines on the submission of reports of States parties relating to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

32. The rapid and virtually universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had generated an increasing amount of work for all partners involved in the implementation and monitoring process, including the Committee itself. The Committee had so far received 163 initial and 51 periodic States parties' reports. It had reviewed 168 reports and nearly 60 remained to be considered, resulting in a waiting list of approximately two years. The Committee had for some time been systematically searching for ways and means to decrease the backlog. In that regard, mention should be made of two recent measures adopted by the Committee: firstly, at its twenty-second session held in September and October 1999, the Committee had decided to consider nine reports instead of six at each of its sessions in order to reduce the existing backlog. That measure, which had been implemented over the past two years, had reduced the time lapse between the submission and consideration of reports to an average of one year. Secondly, in August 2001, the Chairman of the Committee had sent a letter to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of all those States parties which had not communicated their acceptance of the amendment to article 43 (2) of the Convention to encourage them to do so, since enlarging the membership of the Committee would help it to deal with the heavy workload.

33. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to provide special support to activities related to the application of the Convention through the Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on

the Rights of the Child, in force since 1997, which was now part of the global programme to improve the servicing of the treaty monitoring system. In addition to providing substantive support to the Committee, activities carried out under the Plan of Action included helping States parties to fulfil their reporting obligations and following up the Committee's recommendations. During the period under review, the Committee had continued to increase its cooperation with agencies and organs of the United Nations and other competent bodies, including non-governmental organizations. It had held meetings with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food and the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing.

34. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) said that the enlistment and participation of children in military operations was a matter of universal concern since hundreds of child soldiers died or were wounded in hostilities. Children did not join up with combatants because they wanted to, but because they were forced to by poverty and economic privation. He asked the representative of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict whether her Office was considering the possibility of setting up a project to address the root causes of the mass recruitment of child soldiers and their participation in armed conflict. The Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF had referred to a Medium-Term Strategic Plan for the period 2002-2005 which was to be presented to the UNICEF Executive Board for approval and had mentioned that education for girls was one of its five organizational priorities. He wished to know whether the Plan for 2002-2005 would emphasize only education for girls, setting aside education for children as a whole, or would simply place special emphasis on education for girls while continuing the overall children's education programme.

35. **Mr. Zoumanigui** (Guinea) said that, two years previously, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had mentioned an experimental project for children in Sierra Leone and had said that negotiations with donors to enable the programme to be started were well advanced. At the current meeting, the representative of the Special Representative had mentioned an initiative for children which had already been implemented in Sierra Leone and might also be applied in other countries. He wished to know what linkage there was between the new initiative and the experimental project and whether the experimental project had been implemented and, if not, why it had been decided to implement the initiative and not the project. If the initiative was to be applied in other countries, what were the prospects for its implementation?

36. UNICEF had already helped to demobilize some 7,000 child soldiers in Sierra Leone and to free thousands of child prisoners. He asked what coordination actually existed between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF, other United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations on the ground.

37. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed regret that the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of children affected by armed conflict made no mention of the situation of children under the yoke of foreign occupation. Although everyone knew what was happening with those children, that was not enough to protect their rights.

38. **Ms. Stevens** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union and the European Commission attached great importance to mainstreaming the rights of the child into all their activities, as the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, which integrated children's rights into project financing, had demonstrated. She asked how the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights mainstreamed the rights of the child into its overall activities and, in that context, how it approached the issue of the child's right to participation.

39. The European Union welcomed the fact that child protection advisers had been included in peacemaking and peacekeeping operations, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, and would like to know what the lessons learned mentioned by the representative of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had been and what cooperation existed between UNICEF and other United Nations bodies.

40. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that, although it was difficult to make a meaningful contribution owing to the late receipt of the Secretary-General's report, she would like to point out that the report of the Special Representative referred to cooperation with non-governmental organizations and civil society in

activities designed to mitigate the harmful effects of armed conflict on children. She wished to know whether the Office of the Special Representative held consultations with non-governmental organizations from countries affected by conflict and sought a range of views on how to put an end to those harmful consequences. International non-governmental organizations did a magnificent job, but she would like to know what activities were being carried out with national non-governmental organizations on the ground. She would also appreciate further details of the work of the Office of the Special Representative in supporting peace initiatives and asked whether it took into account the presence of armed or rebel groups, which were responsible for many violations of the rights of the child in areas affected by armed conflict.

41. **Ms. Hagon** (Australia) drew attention to the important role that children and young people could play in dealing with all the issues that affected them. Under article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children had the right to express their views, which should be taken into account in all matters affecting them. Consequently, she would like to know whether studies had been carried out into means of enhancing the participation of children from all social backgrounds and concerning initiatives designed to foster that participation.

42. **Ms. Barghouti** (Palestine) said that, despite the very late receipt of the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict, her delegation had been able to examine the report and had found that it contained no reference to children affected by armed occupation. She asked whether that had been an omission in the report and said that she would comment further on the issue in a later statement.

43. **Mr. Ferrer** (Cuba) expressed regret that neither the Executive Director of UNICEF nor, especially, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had been able to attend the meeting. His delegation also regretted the late distribution of the Special Representative's report and the fact that, as in the past, the report mentioned the links between the Office of the Special Representative and its activities and the Security Council. He reiterated his delegation's position that the Charter of the United Nations established clearly the functions and powers of each organ of the United Nations, and its opposition to the growing involvement of the Security Council in activities relating to children. Since the issue was a social, humanitarian and human rights one, it belonged within the sphere of competence of the General Assembly, as the most democratic, participatory and representative organ of the United Nations, and that of the Economic and Social Council.

44. In that context, the most important thing was that the report dealt with children's involvement in armed conflict from the standpoint of its consequences, rather than its causes. His delegation believed that the fundamental approach must be a comprehensive analysis of the causes of conflict, since the consequences for health, education and production systems, among others, affected children in one way or another whether or not they participated directly in a conflict. He asked why the Office of the Special Representative did not put more emphasis on the question of conflict prevention and on studies of the causes of conflict and measures for tackling them.

45. **Ms. Hammam** (Director of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), replying to the question from the representative of Pakistan, said that it was necessary to address the underlying causes of the participation of children in armed conflict, rather than merely dealing with its consequences. There was agreement within the Office of the Special Representative on that point. As part of the Office's research agenda, concrete information on the situation of children would be compiled and the reasons for their participation in conflicts would be analysed. As for prevention efforts, the Office had made and would continue to make significant contributions to the report of the Secretary-General and would also devote increased attention to peacekeeping and peace-building efforts. She agreed that poverty was one of the reasons for the participation of children in armed conflict and underscored the need to reinforce the traditional values which in all cultures served to protect children from such conflict.

46. Replying to the question from the representative of Guinea, she said that various initiatives had been undertaken with regard to Sierra Leone, including the radio programme "Voice of Children", which was broadcast in collaboration with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and via which children were able to reach out to other children. Similar activities were also under way in other countries, such as Colombia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and would also be copied in various areas

with a view to creating what UNESCO called an international culture of peace.

47. The representative of Cuba had asked a question on the relationship between the Office of the Special Representative and the Security Council; the peace operations mandate should guarantee protection for children, and the Council was a legitimate forum for discussion of that issue.

48. Turning to the question asked by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Observer for Palestine, she said that any foreign occupation implied a situation of armed conflict which affected children and that her Office, as part of its research agenda, intended to deal with that issue through both research and promotion activities.

49. Replying to the question from the representative of the Sudan, she said that the Special Representative, during his country visits, endeavoured to promote cooperation with non-governmental organizations and civil society at the national level, as had been the case during his recent mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With regard to peace initiatives relating to insurgent groups, the objective was to monitor and protect the rights of children, as provided for under humanitarian law, and to secure a commitment in that regard from all parties.

50. Lastly, replying to the question from the representative of Belgium, speaking on behalf of the European Union, she said that the initial review of recent experience in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the child protection advisers would suggest that their mandate should be enhanced. As for the delay in submission of the report of the Special Representative, she apologized and explained that the delay had initially been deliberate, so that the report could incorporate the results of the special session of the General Assembly, which had, in the end, been postponed.

51. **Mr. Roberfroid** (Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF), replying to the question from the representative of Pakistan, said that UNICEF had no intention of ignoring the education of boy children but did consider the education of girl children to be a priority given their particularly disadvantaged situation. Nearly two thirds of all children not attending school were girls, although it was certainly also true that education for young girls would never improve if basic general education did not also improve. Replying to the question from the delegations of Belgium, speaking on behalf of the European Union, and Guinea, he said that the child protection advisers had cooperated closely with UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative: their mandate had been prepared by consensus, and hiring and all other activities were undertaken jointly. An initial review was under way which would no doubt show that their mandate was very clear: the advisers reported on the situation of and specific problems faced by children and ensured that all peace programmes took their situation into account; UNICEF took responsibility for all activities which required increased human resources, such as dealing with existing problems, improving basic education and health systems and implementing demobilization and repatriation activities. Personnel in the field had indicated that they had received strong support from the advisers, and the review should help in fine-tuning some aspects of that very positive cooperation effort. Turning to the question from the representative of Australia, he said that it was essential to show that children could and should have a significant role to play. A number of youth delegates had already been planning to attend the special session when it had been postponed. The session was a novel initiative which had encountered some opposition, but it seemed to be off to a good start, and it was to be hoped that when it was finally held there would be a high level of youth participation. Such participation already existed at the national level, and various non-governmental organizations, especially in urban areas where there were street children, were working to help children help each other. Lastly, he agreed with the representative of Australia that more documentation must be made available in order to counter the prevailing scepticism about such experiments; the special session would provide a good opportunity to demonstrate that they were not mere exercises in rhetoric.

52. **Mr. Ndiaye** (Director of the New York Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), replying to the question posed by the representative of Belgium on behalf of the European Union concerning the mainstreaming of the rights of the child in the work of the Office of the High Commissioner and the participation of young people in its programme, said that, like the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Office attached equal importance to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and promoted a human rights-based

approach to implement programmes designed to permit the enjoyment of the rights set forth in the Convention. The Durban Conference was one example of youth participation, and the Office of the High Commissioner had urged Governments to include young people in their delegations. The Office was also in favour of young people examining the reports of States parties to the Convention, submitting their comments to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and even participating in the Conference of States Parties. Furthermore, the Office tried to implement the Committee's recommendations and made them known to other mechanisms, such as special rapporteurs, who often invoked the Convention in support of their mandate. It also passed them on to United Nations teams working on the ground and used them to make needs assessments of countries which requested technical assistance. Lastly, it worked with non-governmental organizations in which children participated, and it came into direct contact with children wherever it had a presence on the ground, which was the case in 28 countries, as well as taking part in all activities designed to protect the rights of children, such as those being carried out in Sierra Leone.

53. **Ms. Stevens** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland, said that the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly on children had helped to build momentum at the global level for the defence of children. In accordance with the Convention, efforts must continue to be made to ensure that there was no relaxation of the attention given to children, particularly those living in difficult circumstances, to whom the international community had pledged to devote increased attention at the special session. The European Union would step up its efforts to ensure that, at the local, national and international levels, children and adolescents could exercise their right to express opinions and participate in the decision-making process in order to help build a better world. In that regard, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, proclaimed on 7 December 2000, contained elements relating to children, including their right to express opinions. The European Union reaffirmed its decision to participate constructively in the negotiations on the final document, in which effective strategies would have to be formulated for enhancing the effective promotion and protection of the rights of the child and which would have to comprise a strong declaration and an ambitious plan of action. In order not to prejudice the negotiations of the Preparatory Committee for the special session, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries and the European Union would be submitting a procedural draft resolution rather than the traditional general draft resolution on the agenda item under discussion.

54. The Convention on the Rights of the Child should guide the activities of the international community, since it remained the frame of reference and the fundamental legal basis for the exercise of the rights of the child. The European Union, together with most delegations, was making every effort to ensure that priority was given to children's rights in the final document of the special session on children. It was very important that the States parties to the Convention should apply its provisions effectively and that countries which had not already done so should ratify it. The European Union was deeply concerned at the number of reservations to the Convention and reiterated its appeal to States to review and withdraw their reservations, which were incompatible with the object and spirit of the Convention. The European Union also urged States to sign, ratify and apply the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In that regard, it welcomed the news from the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF that Romania had deposited its instruments of ratification of the Additional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which meant that the Additional Protocol could now enter into force. The European Union commended the work done by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and expressed support for the Committee in its efforts to promote and to protect children's rights. It was important that States which had not already done so should accept the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention, enlarging the membership of the Committee, so that it could enter into force.

55. The entry into force of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, raising the minimum age for participation in hostilities to 18 years, would be an enormous step forward. The European Union called upon States to also sign and to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which characterized the enlistment of children

under the age of 15 or their use to participate actively in hostilities as a war crime. In the final document of the special session on children, the European Union hoped to see firm adherence to the principle of protection of child soldiers and of children in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly refugee, unaccompanied and internally displaced children.

56. The European Union welcomed the fact that the issue of children in armed conflict had been included in the work of the Security Council and sincerely hoped that the Council, during the debate scheduled to take place on that issue, would adopt an ambitious resolution, which would elicit a positive response to the requests made by the Secretary-General in his most recent report on the issue. The mainstreaming of child protection in peacekeeping operations such as MONUC and UNAMSIL was an example of the strengthening of measures to protect children affected by armed conflict. Peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building mandates should always include special provisions on the protection of children.

57. The European Union reiterated its thanks to Mr. Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and to numerous non-governmental organizations and international organizations, such as UNICEF, for the commendable work which they were doing in the field. The European Union particularly appreciated the effectiveness and dedication of UNICEF and its decisive contribution to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. It also paid tribute to Ms. Graça Machel, as a result of whose dedication increasing attention was being drawn to the tragic situation of children affected by armed conflict.

58. Children had the right to be protected from torture and all forms of violence, physical or mental abuse or brutality, abandonment, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation. The European Union believed that those issues should be tackled forcefully in the final document of the special session of the General Assembly on children. Greater awareness of the many aspects of violence against children would make it easier to formulate strategies to combat such violence. In that context, the European Union welcomed the fact that the Committee on the Rights of the Child had devoted a day in late September 2001 in Geneva, to discussing the theme of violence suffered by children in schools and within the family, and it hoped that the Committee's recommendations would be taken into account when the time came to formulate measures to eradicate that scourge. The discussion had been the second phase of the general debate on the issue of violence against children, which had begun in 2000. The European Union supported the Committee's request for the creation of a working group to conduct an in-depth study on the issue of violence against children.

59. Children continued to be victims of various forms of sexual exploitation, such as prostitution, pornography, the sale of children, paedophilia and sexual abuse within the family. In that area too, greater awareness and in-depth analysis of the problem should lead to ongoing, increased action which transcended national borders, since the crime of sexual exploitation of children knew no borders: its perpetrators were becoming increasingly professional and were taking advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization (increasingly complex cross-border organizations, the possibilities offered by the Internet, prostitution networks, sex tourism, etc.). The member States of the European Union had adopted various national and international measures to combat the sexual exploitation of children, such as the STOP and Daphne programmes, and would continue to strengthen their action at all levels. All the European Union member countries had signed the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

60. The European Union welcomed the work carried out by Ms. Calcetas-Santos, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and also the opportunity that the international community would have at the upcoming World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Yokohama to review the measures adopted since the 1996 Congress in Stockholm.

61. Child labour was another serious form of exploitation of children. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) figures, 250 million children aged between 5 and 14 years were working to earn a living. Many more were engaged in "invisible" work or were being exploited in conditions of near slavery. The European Union believed that the eradication of all forms of exploitation of children should be a priority for all States. It therefore called on all States that had not yet done so to ratify ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and on States parties to that Convention to

begin fulfilling their commitments thereunder immediately.

62. With regard to HIV/AIDS, the European Union would do everything possible to fulfil the commitments made at the special session of the General Assembly on that issue, particularly with regard to children. The same applied to health policy in general. The European Union would insist tirelessly that the rights of boys and girls to receive reproductive health care and services, rights recognized in the basic documents of all the major United Nations conferences, must not be called into question in the outcome document of the special session.

63. The European Union wished to raise an issue of particular concern to it, namely, the application of the death penalty to minors, which certain countries still maintained in their legislation; it urged those countries to abolish it. It was essential to take measures to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the principles set out by the United Nations in that area. The European Union was also deeply concerned at the use of torture against children and called upon States which had not already done so to ratify and abide by the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

64. The European Union believed that a world fit for children could be built only if the international community was prepared to invest in them. Children's exercise of their economic, social and cultural rights was vitally important for their development. It had been demonstrated that investing in primary education, especially for girls, was the most productive decision that a society could take. It was essential to reduce the marginalization of disadvantaged children who suffered the anguish of poverty and unequal opportunities. That meant investing in the right to education, which was an essential element in combating exclusion. The European Union attached great importance to the conclusions of the World Education Forum held in Dakar in April 2000. In keeping with the Framework for Action adopted at the Forum, it believed that education was a fundamental right and the key to sustainable development and peace within and between countries, and it recalled the importance of incorporating into children's education the teaching of human rights, tolerance, citizenship and the exercise of democracy.

65. No child should suffer discrimination. Non-discrimination was one of the cornerstones of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, it had been recognized that many of the victims of racism and other forms of intolerance were children, particularly girls. It was necessary, therefore, to give priority to assisting children who were victims of discrimination.

66. Deploring the persistent discrimination against women and the girl child, the European Union believed that gender mainstreaming should be applied to all policies concerning young people. In dealing with issues such as violence, exploitation, reproductive and sexual rights and female genital mutilation, particular attention should be paid to the girl child.

67. The European Union reaffirmed the importance of ensuring that disabled children were fully integrated into society. Many children with disabilities did not enjoy equal rights to participate in the same activities as other children, even in family life. It was important to guarantee access to education, vocational training and social services for disabled children and to ensure respect for all their rights.

68. In conclusion, the European Union gave its commitment to combat all forms of discrimination against children, with a view to ensuring that all boys and girls enjoyed the right to participate on an equal footing in the building of a world fit for children.

69. **Mr. Martin Andjaba** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the 14 member countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that, owing to the postponement of the special session on children, the debate on children and armed conflict was taking place before the adoption of the document entitled "A World Fit for Children", which would have made a tremendous contribution to the discussion.

70. In the decade since the Convention on the Rights of the Child had entered into force, the plight of the world's children had barely improved. The SADC region was among those worst affected by armed conflict. The direct and indirect impact of war had taken a heavy toll on children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. The SADC members noted with appreciation that UNICEF and other United Nations funds, programmes and offices were assisting children affected by conflicts in those two countries. In that connection, they welcomed the

inclusion of child protection in the mandate of MONUC and the deployment of senior child protection advisers. They were pleased to note that the "Action for the Rights of the Child" (ARC) project, developed jointly by the International Save the Children Alliance, UNHCHR, UNICEF and UNHCR, would provide training not only for the staff of UNHCR but also for governmental and non-governmental partners.

71. The SADC members welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the prompt ratification of ILO Convention No. 182. Many SADC countries were currently taking the necessary steps to sign or ratify the two Protocols. More specifically, on 25 April 2001 Namibia had ratified both Protocols, and it would soon deposit the instruments of ratification. In that regard, SADC urged Member States to integrate into their national legislation the principle of a minimum age of military recruitment of 18 years.

72. The SADC countries attached great importance to continued interaction and collaboration between the various United Nations agencies and to a wide range of programmes such as Action for the Rights of the Child, the International Save the Children Alliance and "Say Yes for Children". That was a welcome development which, if fully taken advantage of, would facilitate the realization of the dream of "A World Fit for Children".

73. The HIV/AIDS pandemic had become a major threat to the progress made in the SADC region. As a result of HIV/AIDS-related deaths, many children had been orphaned and, consequently, left more vulnerable to poverty and to all kinds of child abuse. SADC fully supported the Declaration of Commitment adopted at the special session on HIV/AIDS in June 2001 and particularly welcomed the inclusion of a section dealing with children affected by HIV/AIDS. The SADC countries therefore called on their international partners for enhanced cooperation and assistance in order to achieve the necessary social development to be able to implement their commitments. They also encouraged developed countries to honour their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to development aid and to increase official development assistance to developing countries, in order to enable the countries of the region to implement programmes aimed at social development.

74. SADC attached great importance to education. Most of its member States had acceded to international conventions on educational development and undertaken policy reform measures with the emphasis on universal education. A significant number of SADC countries had already achieved net enrolment rates of 90 per cent in primary education. In that regard, SADC welcomed the African Girls' Education Initiative, adopted as a result of the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000. It noted that the Committee on the Rights of the Child had decided at its twenty-third session to devote one day of its general discussion in September 2000 to the issue of violence against children and one day in September 2001 to the problems of violence suffered by children in schools and within the family.

75. The report of the Secretary-General on social development revealed that 113 million children in the world were not enrolled in school, and that 60 per cent of them were girls. Those figures presented an unacceptable reality and a grievous waste of human development potential, and SADC welcomed the commitment given by the Secretary-General in Dakar to make girls' education a priority.

76. All member States of SADC were parties to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child and were fully committed to the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children, held in Cairo, Egypt, from 23 to 31 May 2001. Furthermore, they welcomed the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, due to be held in Yokohama in December 2001, which they hoped would result in new commitments for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

77. Finally, SADC was concerned because issues specific to the girl child were barely mentioned in United Nations documents, even though the lives of girls continued to be beset by difficulties.

78. **Mr. Valdés** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that he regretted that even in the context of the negotiations on the document "A World Fit for Children" there were still obstacles and arguments which questioned the principal achievements, objectives and principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments and recognized by United Nations conferences and summits. He was concerned that terms

and language accepted by consensus in innumerable documents relating to social issues had been subjected to distortions and unilateral interpretations. It was to be hoped that the Plan of Action for the next 10 years to be adopted at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly would consolidate within a coherent programme the various concepts, commitments and objectives defined by the international community in the series of summits and conferences which had occurred since the World Summit for Children, at which the need for specific policies for adolescents, along with other issues, had been recognized.

79. Lives must be saved and everything possible must be done so that those lives could be lived with dignity and bright prospects. Health care must therefore be a priority in government programmes, including the right to receive any necessary and appropriate services in the area of sexual and reproductive health, which, in addition to the right to health care, implied the right to receive education, information and services in areas relating to reproduction. It was also important that States which had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child should ensure that the principles and rights contained therein became a reality. The right to receive necessary and appropriate services in the areas of health and education was an objective which could not be postponed, and free and compulsory primary education, without discrimination of any kind, in particular on the basis of race or gender, must also become a reality.

80. Bearing in mind the original consultation processes held in Kingston and in Panama City, the Rio Group called on the international community to design, implement and strengthen specific plans and programmes at the national and international levels with a view to gradually eliminating child labour.

81. The expansion of international trade was of vital importance for the prosperity of the countries in the region and the Rio Group countries reiterated their individual and collective commitment to strengthening a multilateral, open, non-discriminatory, safe and predictable free trade system. Regional integration and increased trade between the various regions in the world, on the basis of equality, must also be promoted. That would help to promote greater investment in children and adolescents, eliminate discrimination and reduce inequality and marginalization. The guarantee of a favourable economic environment would contribute to efforts aimed at dealing with the sad reality of street children and increasing suppo boys, girls and adolescents who were membe minority groups as well as for the most vuln groups, in particular indigenous peoples.

82. **Mr. Paolillo** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) associated countries, welcomed the statement ma behalf of the Rio Group. Protection and promot the rights of the child had been a basic princi social commitment in the expanded MERC group, which since the Buenos Aires Charte undertaken to ensure effective implementation guiding principles on comprehensive protectio children and adolescents and promote the develo of specific policies in that area, taking into accou family and community context while giving priority to preventive and corrective measures.

83. It had also been decided to establish MERCOSUR support mechanisms for the disadvantaged social groups, prioritizing aspects as nutrition, with special attention to children, women heads of household and under age m among others. Concrete measures had been pro to meet the special needs of boys, girls and adole who were victims of violence and sexual abuse deal with issues involving child labour, pregnancy, drug abuse and involvement in crime.

84. The countries of the expanded MERC group and associated countries had com themselves to guaranteeing the right to basic edu and to promoting access to secondary, technica vocational education, which were decisive facto overcoming poverty and ideal vehicles for soci economic mobility. At the first formal meeting Ministers of Social Development of MERC Bolivia and Chile, held in Asunción in March 20 had also been decided to prioritize actions aim eliminating child labour, in particular its worst and to develop joint strategies within the framew a doctrine of comprehensive protection. The n family had been deemed of fundamental importa the unit on which to focus social policies aim among others, encouraging boys and girls to primary school and adolescents to co intermediate-level education.

85. The countries of the expanded MERC group were committed to improving the qual education through teacher training, promotion o

values in the curriculum and the use of information technologies. An effort was also being made to integrate the many indigenous children living in most of the MERCOSUR countries, Bolivia and Chile into that process. One method of promoting respect for their cultures was to provide them with bilingual education, which was an enormous challenge given the tremendous financial and human resources required.

86. The health care and health services sector was an issue of major importance for the countries of the expanded MERCOSUR group. Progress had been made, but it remained an ongoing challenge owing to difficulties encountered in economic and social development.

87. The grave problem of children living or working in the streets remained to be resolved, in spite of intensive efforts to eliminate that problem on the part of the authorities, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

88. The basic guidelines and frame of reference for all action on behalf of children and adolescents in the MERCOSUR and associated countries were provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Those countries were also guided by the principles embodied in regional and international documents which showed countries where they should be headed in their efforts to protect children and adolescents; those included the optional protocols to the Convention, which most of the countries in the group had already signed. The MERCOSUR and associated countries noted with satisfaction that the protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography would be entering into force in January 2002.

89. The MERCOSUR and associated countries were pleased at the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and urged countries to approve the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2 of the Convention, which would increase from 10 to 18 the number of experts on the Committee so as to ensure that it had the membership needed to carry out its important work.

90. It was unfortunate that in the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly on children, questions had been raised with regard to certain well-established concepts that had long been accepted in the Organization. It was a disservice to children to hold them hostage to political games and circumstances.

91. Much remained to be done on behalf of children and adolescents, both in the MERCOSUR region and throughout the world. It was therefore essential to work in a focused manner so as to ensure that the further commitments undertaken during the forthcoming special session would lead to genuine progress on the matter.

92. **Ms. Yang Yi** (China) said that 2001 marked the tenth anniversary of the Chinese Government's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Over those 10 years, the Chinese Government had actively fulfilled its commitments, further improved the situation with regard to the survival and development of children, safeguarded children's legitimate rights and interests and made unremitting efforts to promote child development.

93. Her Government had submitted its first report on its implementation of the Convention, and the report had been considered. The Committee had expressed its approval of China's conscientious implementation of the Convention. To further demonstrate its emphasis on the protection of the rights of the child, her Government had signed the two optional protocols to the Convention and was pressing ahead for their ratification. In the meantime, it was now preparing its second report on implementation of the Convention.

94. China had developed a fairly comprehensive legal system to ensure the survival and development of children. The system was centred on the Constitution and the Protection of Minors Act and included civil, criminal and administrative laws and regulations, such as the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency Act, the Education Act, the Maternal and Child Health Care Act, the Adoption Act, the Marriage Act and the Labour Act, thereby providing effective legal guarantees for the protection of children's rights and interests.

95. In 1992, in line with the general targets of the national plan for economic and social development and in the light of the 24 global goals of child development, her Government, taking into account the current situation in respect of child survival and development in China, had formulated the National Programme of Action for Child Development in the 1990s. The Programme contained 49 targets, including lowering the infant mortality rate, lowering the under-five mortality rate, lowering the infant malnutrition rate, maintaining the rate of coverage of planned

immunization, universalizing basic education, protecting children in hardship and protecting children from HIV/AIDS. By the end of 2000, China had basically attained the global goals set out in its Programme of Action for Children and by the World Summit for Children. All those actions fully demonstrated that China had made tremendous achievements in protecting children's rights. On 22 May 2001, her Government had promulgated the new National Programme of Action for Children (2001-2010), setting even higher standards and requirements for the protection of children's rights and thus providing effective safeguards for the healthy growth of the child.

96. In the view of her delegation, protecting children's rights was a common cause of the entire international community. Her delegation was gratified to see the beneficial work done by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as efforts made by the Secretary-General and the two special rapporteurs on the question of the child.

97. Many cases of violations of children's rights still occurred around the world. To enable every child in the world to enjoy the rights provided in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it was still necessary for the international community and Governments of all countries to take effective measures to eliminate the sources of the problems of children and to provide an environment conducive to their growth. Her delegation hoped that the special session of the General Assembly on children would be a success. It believed that the concerted efforts of the international community to protect children would result in further progress which would benefit children throughout the world.

98. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said that recently there had been shift in focus on children from a welfare and assistance perspective to concentration on the rights of the child and related obligations and responsibilities of States to protect children, a development which Norway strongly supported. It was the responsibility of every State to provide conditions for children in which they might prosper in peace and in which human rights were respected.

99. Girls were especially vulnerable in many situations. His delegation was gravely concerned by evidence of large-scale trafficking in young girls and stressed the need for consolidated action to protect children from that abhorrent practice which had become an industry of enormous proportions and which violated the most fundamental rights of children. In that context, he was pleased to announce that Norway had recently ratified the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and urged other States to do so as soon as possible.

100. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that it was now time to start an "era of application" of standards. Although States Parties themselves had primary responsibility for the implementation of the protocol, it was also a sphere in which international cooperation was crucial. The Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which was to be held in Japan later in 2001, would present an ideal opportunity to strengthen cooperation and improve coordination of efforts in that regard.

101. The particular vulnerability of children placed them at risk during times of public unrest, social instability and particularly at times of armed conflict. Norway strongly supported Security Council initiatives to address the issue of children in armed conflict and efforts to adopt a resolution on that subject, since it believed that the rights and needs of children should occupy a privileged place in all relevant matters handled by the Security Council. In that connection, the recommendations of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should be given full consideration.

102. The 1998 adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was an important step towards assigning responsibility for certain crimes that also affected children; the international community now had an opportunity to make offenders accountable for universally recognized crimes against humanity, including the conscription and enlistment of children under 15 years of age into the armed forces, the use of children to participate in hostilities and the targeting of children as a strategy of conflict. All States must put an end to impunity for those disgraceful practices.

103. Displacement was another extreme risk for children. Displaced children lost the security of their community and in many cases their family, and often were regarded with resentment and suspicion when they arrived in new communities. Since many of those children suffered traumatic violations of human rights and humanitarian law, they might need special protection in the country where they sought refuge.

Civil society played an important role in the peace-building process, which was crucial for strengthening local processes and preventing future violence. The participation of children in those processes was a critical element in the achievement of a lasting peace and a humane, productive society. It was important to give children a voice and to listen to them.

104. It was unfortunate that the special session of the General Assembly on children had had to be postponed; however he stressed the need to keep issues relating to children at the very top of the United Nations agenda. In the process leading up to the special session, Norway would continue to participate actively and constructively in negotiations on the final document, and would do its utmost to ensure that the special session produced a strong document and firm plan of action that would make a real difference for children.

105. **Ms. Khuan** (Russian Federation) said that the attacks of 11 September 2001 had not lessened the determination of the community of nations to promote children's rights, security and well-being. As had been mentioned by President Vladimir Putin, terrorism knew no moral boundaries and terrorist brutality constituted a grave menace for the children of the world, who must be protected from it. Regional cooperation in matters relating to childhood had made a considerable contribution to the preparations for the special session, as had been shown in 2001 when various regional conferences had been held in Minsk, Berlin and Stockholm. Those conferences had examined the issue of safeguarding the rights of the child and had produced recommendations for national strategies to improve the lives of new generations. Those recommendations should be published as an annex to the document of the special session entitled "A world fit for children".

106. Safeguarding the interests of children was a priority area for the authorities in the Russian Federation. In 1998, a federal law had been promulgated regarding basic guarantees of children's rights in the country. That law established basic criteria for the promotion and protection of children's rights and for improving their living conditions. In 2000, ten special programmes for children had been renewed and extended until 2002; four of them were under the direct control of the President himself. In 2001, the Government had approved a plan to improve children's living conditions during the period 2002-2004 and had completed the elaboration of the basic criteria of its social policy relating to children, which would be in force until 2010. In 2000, his Government had signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In 2001, it had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would serve to give more effective protection to the rights of the girl child. Preparations had also begun for ratification of those international instruments and of ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

107. Despite the establishment in the Russian Federation over the past 10 years of a new system of legal protection for the interests of children which was adapted to the new socio-economic situation, there were still problems requiring urgent solutions. In that context, UNICEF Executive Director Ms. Carol Bellamy had made a working tour of the Russian Federation from 6 to 10 October 2001, during which she had reaffirmed her commitment to continue increasing cooperation in the areas of social protection, health care and the promotion of the rights of the child. Ms. Bellamy had also had an opportunity to familiarize herself with three experimental projects in St. Petersburg: the social and rehabilitation centre "House of Labour", for girls affected by violence, the young people's clinic "Juventa" and the programme dedicated to those infected with HIV and those suffering from AIDS. All those activities were part of a broader UNICEF programme entitled "Health and Development of Youth". With help from UNICEF, authorities had been established in eight regions in the country with responsibility for defending the rights of the child. The Russian Federation attached great importance to interaction with UNICEF and would in future give considerable support to its commendable work. A new cooperation programme for the period 2003-2005 was currently being prepared, taking into account priority issues at the national level. Lastly, she commended the courage of the UNICEF staff members currently carrying out their vital humanitarian mission for the children of Afghanistan.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.